The theology of the early friends and its implications for the ministry of women in seventeenth century English Quakerism.

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THE THEOLOGY OF THE EARLY FRIENDS AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR THE MINISTRY OF WOMEN IN SEVENTEENTH CENTURY ENGLISH QUAKERISM

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF THEOLOGY AND RELIGIOUS STUDIES IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

BY
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KING'S COLLEGE, LONDON, 1991.

ABSTRACT

The Theology of the Early Friends
and its Implications for the Ministry of Women
in Seventeenth Century English Quakerism.

This thesis contends that the high degree of privilege allowed to women in early Quakerism was a result of the dramatic religious experience of the first Quakers, and the interpretation they placed upon it. From this experience arose the conviction that the church had been apostate since the Apostles' days and that the emergence of the Quaker movement signified the restoration of the true church and the end of the age. Their outlook was both eschatological and highly Christocentric: they believed that Christ's work of reversing the Fall and restoring all creation to pre-Fall perfection and unity with God was being realised in their midst. Christ had come again, and was experienced (among other things) as Judge, Prophet, and Head. This I take to be the heart of Quakerism. It affected every aspect of their beliefs and practice, and it is in this light that the Quakers' unique contribution to the history of women in religion is best examined.

The material is structured in two sections. The first examines three aspects of early Quakerism -- the work of Christ, the Bible, and the group's development from early enthusiasm into an established sect. The second relates these to the issue of women's ministry, showing how the Quakers' understanding of Christ and their Christocentric interpretation of Scripture enabled them to challenge traditional views of women. By the close of the century the eschatological vision governing these beliefs had dwindled, and with it -- to a degree -- the

radical stance on women's ministry.

These conclusions are based on the writings of a wide range of early Quakers. Their style is often diffuse, repetitive and difficult to order or summarise. My practice has therefore been to include many substantial quotations to convey not only the content, but also the distinctive atmosphere of their thought.

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PART II. WOMEN IN EARLY QUAKERISM

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My thanks go to the many people who have helped and encouraged me during the time it has taken me to write this thesis. In particular, I would like to thank the trustees of the Radley Charitable Trust, and of the Bethune Baker Fund for their generous support; the staff at Woodbrooke College, Birmingham, for allowing me to use their Library, and the staff at Friends' House Library, London. I am grateful also to the many others who have helped at various stages -- my family, friends at Durham University, at Ridley Hall, Cambridge, at Oxford and at Preston-on-Tees. My especial thanks go to Dr. Ann Loades for her supervision of the early stages of this project, and her continued interest in its development; and also to the Rev. Dr. Brian Horne for his supervision, insight and encouragement over the last few years. Finally, I would like to thank my husband Pete for all his love and support. He has saved me from a number of errors at many stages -- in particular that of abandoning the project altogether.

PREFACE

This study arose out of the conviction that the explanation for the early Quakers' liberal attitude towards women's ministry lay in their distinctive theology. This led to a lengthy attempt to locate Quaker doctrine in the great mass of literature they published in the Seventeenth Century, and organise it into conventional theological categories. What, for example, was the early Quaker view of the incarnation? What was their understanding of the nature of Christ? Which model(s) of the atonement did they favour? Did they really deny the doctrine of the Trinity as their opponents claimed? Answers -- confused and sometimes even contradictory -- were to be found scattered through their works, but with these patchy pieces of information came the growing belief that Quakerism was about something else entirely, for the pieces did not appear to fit into any coherent pattern. The writings of many later scholars of Quakerism did little to combat the impression that something was missing. Some writers sought to examine Quakerism against a backdrop of sixteenth-century Continental mysticism,[1] others to place it within the context of radical Puritanism.[2] More interesting was Ronald Knox's placing of George Fox within a long line of religious "enthusiasts", although Knox's analysis of Quakerism itself was not satisfying.[3] Eventually a suggestion from John Punshon at Woodbrooke College, Birmingham, prompted me to consider the Quakers from the point of view of their belief in the imminent Day of the Lord. Eschatology proved to be the key which unlocked the problem of seventeenth-century Quakerism, and which provided a satisfactory framework in which to study the beliefs and practice of the

first Quakers.[4]

The first section of this thesis, then, seeks to explore the most important aspects of early Quaker theology. As far as possible I have tried to allow the subject matter to be dictated by the early Quakers' own concerns as they were voiced in their doctrinal and polemical works. This was the voice that the seventeenth-century Quaker prophets intended the apostate world to hear, and I have attempted to let their voice speak in this thesis. The tendency of these prophets to send "trumpet blasts" and "warnings" into the world, rather than a series of coolly reasoned treatises, defies a conventional approach to analysing their message. Their style is frequently rambling, sometimes incoherent, and invariably packed with quotations from and allusions to the Scriptures. This has necessitated the inclusion of a great many lengthy extracts from their works, since it is not in concise quotations, but in the cumulative effect of their prophetic outpourings that their main concerns become clear. These themes are taken up again in the second section of the thesis, where they are related to the issue of women's ministry within Quakerism.

INTRODUCTION

At the centre of early Quakerism lay the dramatic experience of Christ appearing in the heart. The religious experience of the first Friends had much in common with that of other enthusiastic groups both before and since.[5] The phenomena associated with revivalism were prominent in the first years of the Quaker movement, and earned the Quakers not only their name, but also a good deal of opposition and notoriety. One contemporary wrote the following account of Quaker meetings:

> Though their speakings be a very chaos of words and errors, yet very often while they are speaking, so strange is the effect of them on their unblest followers, that many of them, sometimes men, but more often women and children, fall into quaking fits. The manner of which is this: those in their assembly who are taken with these fits fall suddenly down, as it were in a swoon, as though they were surprised with an epilepsy or apoplexy, and lie grovelling on the earth, and struggling as it were for life, and sometimes more quietly as though they were departing. While the agony of the fit is upon them their lips quiver, their flesh and joints tremble, their bellies swell up as though blown up with wind, they foam at the mouth, and sometimes purge as if they had taken physic. In this fit they continue sometimes an hour or two, sometimes longer, before they come to themselves again, and when it leaves them they roar out horribly with a voice greater than the voice of a man -- the noise, those say that have heard it, is a very horrid fearful noise, and greater sometimes than any bull can make.[6]

This account is supported by a similar description from another writer:

> At meetings after long silence, sometimes one, sometimes more, fell into a great and dreadful shaking and trembling in their whole bodies, and all their joints, with such risings and swellings in their bellies and bowels, sending forth such shriekings, yellings, howlings and roarings, as not only affrighted the spectators, but caused the dogs to bark, the swine to cry, and the cattle to run about.[7]

While both these statements were made by men hostile to Quakerism, there can be no doubt that in the early days this kind of experience was common, and regarded by the Quakers as indicating an encounter with Christ, or his Spirit. So overwhelming was this experience,

particularly when we bear in mind the social and political upheaval of the civil war years, that it led the Quakers to the conviction that they were witnessing the reappearance of the "true church" after centuries of apostasy, and that this heralded the imminent end of the world. This belief affected every area of their doctrine and practice.

The sense that they were living on the brink of the final crisis of history created a great sense of urgency among the first Quakers. It left them without the option of compromise with the fallen world and its apostate churches. The Judge of all the world was at hand, and the Quakers' task was to warn people of the wrath in store for those who ignored the call of Christ (the Light) to repent:

> Prepare, prepare to meet the Lord, O nations, tongues and people; unto you all hereby a warning is come, and a visitation from the presence of the living God, which you are straightly required to put into practice, as at the terrible day of dreadful vengeance you will answer to the contrary.[8]

The aim of both their preaching and writing was to jolt people out of lethargy and sin and to bring them to a point of crisis which would force them to decide for or against the Quaker message. Their proclamation was reinforced by a variety of public prophetic acts, the most notorious of which was "appearing naked as a sign". This was generally intended as a prophecy that God would strip the apostate church of its power, but was interpreted all too often by those watching as straightforward indecency. Such acts were intended to cast the minds of the onlookers within themselves and cause them to witness the pride, sin and hypocrisy which lay hidden there. The Quakers' peculiar social behaviour functioned in a similar way. Their refusal to employ the polite "you" form to a single person, or to bow or doff the hat to their superiors, brought them into conflict with those around them. The

reasons for this practice and the results it provoked were recounted by George Fox in his Journal:

> Because I could not put off my hat to them, it set them all into a rage. But the Lord showed me that it was an honour below, which he would lay in the dust and stain it, an honour which proud flesh looked for, but sought not the honour which came from God only, that it was an honour invented by men in the Fall, and in the alienation from God, who were offended if it were not given them, and yet would be looked upon as saints, church-members, and great Christians... Oh, the rage and scorn, the heat and fury that arose! Oh, the blows, punchings, beatings, and imprisonments that we underwent for not putting off our hats to men! For that soon tried all men's patience and sobriety, what it was... The bad language and evil usage we received on this account are hard to be expressed, besides the danger we were sometimes in of losing our lives for this matter, and that, by the great professors of Christianity, who thereby discovered that they were not true believers. And though it was but a small thing in the eye of man, yet a wonderful confusion it brought among all professors and priests.[9]

The early Quakers, then, were the true "church, which is now gathering and redeeming,... [They were] carried abroad in the power of the Almighty, now to declare his powerful truth."[10] Their message was to be taken throughout the whole world, challenging sinners to repent, and engaging in battle with evil wherever it was found:

> Put on your armour, and gird on your sword, and lay hold on the spear, and march into the field, and prepare yourselves to battle, for the nations doth defy our God, and saith in their heart, Who is the God of the Quakers, that we should fear him and obey his voice? Arise, arise, and sound forth the everlasting word of war and judgment in the ears of all nations.[11]

The warfare would be fierce, but the time was short. The end of all things would not long be delayed. Christ had appeared again in the midst of his people and would soon be fully revealed throughout the whole creation.

Christ was the focus of all their thinking. As one writer asserted, perfect righteousness was the state in which "Christ is all, and the creature nothing".[12] Christ was the great prophet who had come

to teach his people himself, the bridegroom and husband of men and women alike, the captain and leader of his army, the heavenly high priest and king.[13] He was to be known in the heart revealing and judging sin, purging it away, and restoring his people out of the fall back to God again. To him and his great saving work all the Scriptures bore testimony, and both Old and New Testaments found their fulfilment in him.

One consequence of this belief was the Quakers' vigorous rejection of empty religious "forms". The phrase "forms without power" recurs constantly in their writings, and is a reference to 2 Timothy 3:5, which predicts that in the last days men will be lovers of themselves, "having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof". This was the accusation the Quakers levelled at the other religious groups around them, and was bound up in their belief that perfection was possible, indeed essential, in the life of the believer on earth. For the Quakers the suggestion that people were destined to remain sinful until death was a denial of Christ's saving work, and the "power of godliness". George Fox believed that he had been fully sanctified, and when challenged on this point in court, affirmed that he was in the "Paradise of God". He was then asked if he had no sin, and he replied: "Sin?... Christ my Saviour hath taken away my sin, and in him there is no sin." Fox was imprisoned for the "broaching of divers blasphemous opinions". His words provoked a storm of response from the local ministers:

> And then did the priests roar up for sin, in their pulpits, and preach up sin, that people said never was the like heard. It was all their works to plead for it.[14]

No "outward" religious forms and ceremonies could be a valid substitute

for the complete salvation in Christ which the Quakers believed they had experienced. George Fox saw his mission in terms of calling people out of such things:

> I was to bring people off from all their own ways to Christ, the new and living way, and from their churches, which men had made and gathered, to the church in God, the general assembly written in heaven, which Christ is the head of... And I was to bring them off from all the world's fellowships, and prayings, and singings, which stood in forms without power, that their fellowships might be in the Holy Ghost, and in the eternal Spirit of God.[15]

Once people had left these things, then Christ could minister freely in and amongst his people, cleansing them from sin, restoring them to God, and teaching them by his light in their hearts.

There can be little doubt that the first Quakers viewed Christ's appearance in their midst as his Second Coming. "The Lord Jesus Christ is come to reign, and his everlasting sceptre is set up." "Unto [the Jews] ...for the redemption and restoration of the seed the messiah came, and now is coming the second time... even he cometh now in Spirit and in power".[16] Christ was "come and coming" -- he had appeared to them, and would shortly be revealed throughout the world.

Eschatological hopes were widespread in the mid-seventeenth century in England. George Fox wrote of the expectations which flourished in 1656:

> The Baptists and Fifth-Monarchy-Men prophesied that this year Christ should come and reign upon earth a thousand years. And they looked upon this reign to be outward, whenas he was come inwardly in the hearts of his people to reign and rule there, these professors would not receive him there. So they failed in their prophecy and expectation, and had not the possession of him.[17]

The Baptists and Fifth Monarchists were mistaken, Fox believed, in looking for an "outward" reign of Christ and the saints. "Christ is come," wrote Fox, "and doth dwell in the hearts of his people and reigns there."[18] This account was written with the help of hindsight, (Fox

only began work on his Journal in the mid-seventies), and obscures the extent to which the Quakers were anticipating the rule of Christ on earth in more than simply a spiritual sense. They were not looking for an outward political rule, but it is clear that their understanding of the Kingdom on earth was both temporal and spatial, and that its appearance was intimately linked with the Quakers' experience of Christ in the heart. The Kingdom, wrote Edward Burrough,

> consists not in word but in power, to the bringing down of the kingdom of the devil, and to the breaking off the bonds of injustice, and all ungodliness, which is the kingdom of Satan, which hath long ruled in the world. The Kingdom whereof Christ is king, which stands in righteousness, no unclean thing can have any part therein, and this we believe, it shall be set up and advanced in the earth, but not by might of man, or arm of flesh, nor the multitude of an host, neither by policy nor craft, nor by revenge, but by the arm of the Lord alone, through the suffering and patience of his people, and by faithful witness bearing unto Jesus Christ by doing and by suffering, by doing his will in all things in a pure life and conversation, and upright walking in the sight of the Lord, and by patient suffering under the injustice and oppression of men, and of their unjust government and laws, till they be overturned and confounded: and further we give testimony, that suffering in patience and under cruelty and oppression of the devil's government and kingdom more reaches to overthrow them than the rising to rebel in any way of outward offence toward them, or defence from them, and the kingdom of Christ is come near, and the kingdoms of this world shall be changed.[19]

The analysis of early Quakerism in terms of their eschatology is at odds with the assumption that Quakerism was essentially a religion of mystical "Inner Light". All too often Quakerism has been portrayed as a glorious dissent from the harsh religious system of the English Calvinists, with its tyrannical God damning some souls to hell at whim, and equally whimsically saving others. At its most extreme, this kind of dichotomy has led to statements of the following kind:

> Nearly 500 Quakers died in English prisons because they believed that they were saved by the Light of Christ within them, and not by the death of Christ on the cross outside Jerusalem, by which an angry Old Testament God was appeased.[20]

This is highly misleading for several reasons. It is clear from a study of Quaker history that the Quakers were imprisoned for a wide variety of reasons (refusal to take oaths, pay tithes or fines, to be bound over to keep the peace, etc.). These reasons cannot properly be said to spring simply from their view of the atonement. In the disputes between the Quakers and their Calvinist contemporaries there undoubtedly was a clash between subjective and objective models of the atonement; but it is misguided to imply that the Quakers set their inner experience *in opposition* to the death of Christ on the cross. Certainly, they believed that a simple "outward" knowledge of the facts could not save; and further, that the death and resurrection of Christ were also spiritual truths to be experienced in the heart. The work of Christ on earth was not in any sense inferior to the light in salvation history. The work of Christ by his light in the heart made effective his atoning death on the cross. As one Quaker expressed it:

> If I cannot witness Christ nearer than Jerusalem I shall have no benefit by him: but I own no other Christ but that who witnessed a good confession before Pontius Pilate; which Christ I witness in me now.[21]

The assertion that "the doctrine of the indwelling Spirit, also called 'inner Light', was the major Quaker tenet"[22] rests upon the assumption that seventeenth-century Quaker writing was homogeneous. This thesis contends that Quaker beliefs underwent a highly significant change with the collapse of the early eschatological framework. Quakers writing in the heady days of the 1650's were seized by an entirely different vision from that of those who lived to see the persecution of the '60s and '70s, the schisms within the Quaker movement, and the delay of the consummation of their eschatological hopes. Although the Quakers

spoke and wrote about the light from the beginning of the movement, it is not safe to assume that their understanding of it remained unchanged. In the earliest days the light was intimately bound up with the Quakers' belief in the imminent day of the Lord, and in Christ revealed and active in the heart in the last days. The redefinition of the light by the Quakers as their early eschatological beliefs faded was both gradual and subtle. It is this that creates a misleading impression of continuity in early Quaker thought. Accounts of early Quaker belief which take later writers (for instance, William Penn and Robert Barclay) as the mouthpieces of the movement, without reference to the vast body of prophetic tracts of the '50s and '60s, must be treated with caution.[23] One scholar, for example, aimed in his work to "bring back Quakerism to its original faith in the universal saving light as Robert Barclay, the Quaker apologist, described it."[24] Barclay's *Apology* was not published in English until 1678, nearly thirty years after the first appearance of Quakerism, and at a time when eschatological convictions were no longer pivotal in Quaker thought and practice.

This thesis does not attempt to judge the relative merits of the earliest form of Quaker belief and that which succeeded it; rather it seeks to emphasise that radical changes took place, and to explore their nature and implications. Had the Quakers not been fortunate in having leaders able to reassess their beliefs and reorganise the structure of the movement, the group might well have vanished with the Ranters, Muggletonians, and other sects of the period.

Some Notes on Quaker Style.

Early Quaker language was often baffling to those outside the movement. One opponent had this to say:

> our Quakers for a long time hovered up and down like a swarm of flies, with a confused noise and humming, begin now to settle in the opinions lately by them declared for; what their thoughts will fall to be concerning the Holy Ghost when they shall be contented to speak intelligibly and according to the usage of other men, or the pattern of Scripture... I know not, and am uncertain whether they do themselves or no.[25]

It was the shared experience of Christ which made sense of the apparently incoherent style of the first Quaker preachers. Those inside the movement were able to understand what to the outsider appeared to be blasphemous nonsense. There are various features of Quaker writing which account for this confusion. One is their cheerful heaping up of biblical phrases to describe their experience of Christ. Another is their appropriation of current theological terms which they then redefined and used differently. The terms "reprobation" and "election" were given new meanings, as were "free will" and "original sin".[26]

Their style can be equally baffling to the modern reader, and one thing must always be borne in mind: the thoughts of the early Quakers were steeped in the language and ideas of the Bible. Large portions of their writings consist of strings of quotations considered by the writer to be pertinent to the theme being developed. Although direct quotations from the Scriptures were usually printed in italics, allusions to Scriptural passages were not. This has posed problems for more than one modern scholar, since it is not always clear where a Biblical reference ends and Quaker commentary begins.[27]

Another important consideration in dealing with early Quaker material is the apparent lack of distinction made by the first Quaker

prophets between the written and the spoken word. Two things may underlie this characteristic. On the one hand, many early Quakers were not highly educated, and some, at least, dictated their work in preference to writing it. Some of their intended audience were barely literate, and we may visualise a tract being read aloud to a group of listeners who would be unable to read for themselves. On the other hand, the Quakers' understanding of inspiration must have contributed to their writing style. The prophet was the mouthpiece of God, speaking what was given by God, neither adding to it, nor subtracting from it by so much as one word. The first Quaker writers wrote as they were "moved" by the Lord, often in terrible "warnings" to individuals, towns, or entire nations. There is seldom an impression that in the early days of the movement the Quakers sat down and planned sections and headings before launching into their tract. Indeed, if the links between speaking and writing were close, such planning might well have been shunned, for the Quakers were scathing of preachers who prepared sermons in advance, and preached from "brain study" rather than direct inspiration. Some preparation was obviously necessary when the Quakers undertook the task of answering hostile tracts from opponents, but the same direct and personal tone prevailed in these writings as well.

As the years passed various changes took place which brought about a more apologetic style of writing. The early eschatological convictions faded, robbing the Quakers of their utter confidence that the end of all things was at hand. The need to survive in a hostile world became a more serious consideration. Various excesses occurred amongst the ranks of the Quakers, and the leaders of the movement needed to distance themselves from these. At the same time, fears of an armed

Quaker uprising had to be allayed, and the Quakers' refusal to take the oath of allegiance had to be explained. All these concerns were reflected in an increasingly cautious and reasoned manner of writing. This was not an unswerving progression from a polemical to an apologetic style, for fiery prophetic tracts were still being issued at the close of the Seventeenth Century. The trend, however, is clear. The following two extracts illustrate the kind of change which took place. Both writers were discussing the issue of silence in worship. The first, by George Fox, was written in 1657; the second is from Robert Barclay's *Apology*, 1678:

> All the world's teachers, people and professors, you are far from silence, and the silent meeting together, and waiting upon the Lord in silence, you have too much flesh in you, which speaks, and so are too full of words... This is the word of the Lord God to you all, that you may all come to that which God doth manifest within you; it will let you see the birth that must be silent, and bring you to be silent, and to wait to receive teaching from God, then what is said, you may declare from the Lord of heaven most high: Cain was the first birth, and Esau and Ishmael was the first birth; now tell Cain the envious murtherer of a silent meeting or waiting upon God, when he is a vagabond from that of God in him, would slay and murther them that are in the life, and it he will slay and yet sacrifice, to which sacrifice God hath no respect..
>
> If one were about to attend a great Prince, he would be thought an impertinent and impudent servant, who, while he ought patiently and readily to wait, that he might answer the King when he speaks, and have his eye upon him to observe the least motions and inclinations of his will, and to do accordingly, would be still deafening him with discourse, though it were in praises of him, and running to and fro, without any particular and immediate order to do things, that might perhaps be good in themselves, or might have been commanded at other times to others...
>
> This great duty then of waiting on God must needs be exercised in man's denying himself, both inwardly and outwardly in a still and meer dependence upon God, in abstracting from all the workings, imaginations, and speculations of his own mind, that being emptied as it were of himself, and so thoroughly crucified to the natural products thereof, he may be fit to receive the Lord, who will have no co-partner nor co-rival of his glory and power.[26]

The contrast between these two passages reflects more than a

simple difference in temperament between the two men. Fox was writing at a time when the Quaker vision was at its height; when the spread of the message was advancing rapidly. The repression of the Restoration years was still in the future. By the time Barclay was writing it no longer seemed as certain that the Quakers would win the world for Christ, or that the end of all things was imminent. His writing makes appeal to reason. Its tone is measured and thoughtful, making good use of analogy to express his point.[29] The chaotic but direct style of Fox's writing (seen also in that of other Quakers in this period) speaks vividly of the intense excitement and expectation of the first Quakers' spiritual convictions.[30]

ENDNOTES

[1]See, for instance, the writings of Rufus Jones, in particular *Spiritual Reformers in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, (London: Macmillan, 1914); also the writings of William C. Braithwaite, *The Beginnings of Quakerism*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1955); reprint ed., (York: William Sessions, 1981); *The Second Period of Quakerism*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge University Press, 1955); reprint ed., (York: William Sessions, 1979).

[2]See, for instance, Geoffrey Nuttall, *The Holy Spirit in Puritan Faith and Experience*, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1947); Hugh Barbour, *The Quakers in Puritan England*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1964)

[3]Ronald Knox, *Enthusiasm, A Chapter in the History of Religion*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1950).

[4]See Douglas Gwyn, *Apocalypse of the Word. The Life and Message of George Fox, 1624-1691*, (Richmond, Indiana: Friends United Press, 1986), which provides a fine account of Fox's message in terms of his eschatological beliefs. See also Dean Freiday, ed., *The Day of the Lord: Eschatology in Quaker Perspective*, (Philadelphia: Faith and Life Movement, 1981).

[5]See Knox's *Enthusiasm*. See also the accounts of early Methodist meetings, John Wesley, *The Journal of the Rev. John Wesley, A.M. in Four Volumes*, Ernest Rhys, ed., Everyman's Library, 4 vols. (London: J.M. Dent, 1921), eg. vol. 1, 188-190. Also interesting in this context is Andrew Walker *Restoring the Kingdom*, (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1985). His description of the modern Restoration (or House Church) movement has many points of contact with the emergence of Quakerism over three centuries earlier.

[6]Francis Higginson, *A Brief Relation of the Irreligion of the Northern Quakers*, (1653), quoted in Hugh Barbour and Arthur O. Roberts, eds., *Early Quaker Writers 1650-1700*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William E. Eerdman, 1973), 63-78, 73.

[7]Ralph Farmer, *The Great Mysteries of Godliness and Ungodliness*, (1655), quoted in Geoffrey Nuttall, *Studies in Christian Enthusiasm Illustrated from Early Quakerism*, (Pennsylvania: Pendle Hill Publications, 1948), 61. See also Richard Baxter's *The Unreasonableness of Infidelity*, (1655), in *The Practical Works of the Rev. Richard Baxter*, edited by Rev. William Orme, (London: James Duncan, 1830), 23 vols., vol. XX, Chap. III, 1-440, 299. Another opponent mentioned "muttering and uncouth howling" in Quaker meetings; quoted in Edward Burrough's *The Walls of Jericho Razed Down to the Ground*, (1654), in *The Memorable Works of a Son of Thunder and Consolation: Namely, that True Prophet, and Faithful Servant of God, and Sufferer for the Testimony of Jesus, Edward Burrough*, (no printer's name or place, 1672), 18-28, 24. Elsewhere Burrough gives his own account of an early Quaker meeting, see his epistle to the reader, preface to George Fox's *Great Mystery*, quoted in Emelia Fogelklou, *James Nayler the Rebel Saint*, translated by Lajla Yapp, (London: Ernest Benn, 1931), 57.

[9]Burrough, *A Trumpet of the Lord sounded out of Sion*, 1656. *Memorable Works*, 96-114.

[9]George Fox, *The Journal of George Fox*, revised edition by John L. Nickalls, with epilogue by Henry J. Cadbury, introduction by Geoffrey F. Nuttall, (London: Religious Society of Friends, 1975), 36,37. See also Joseph Besse *A Collection of the Sufferings of the People Called Quakers*, 2 vols., (London: Luke Hinde, 1753), for an account of a Quaker tenant in Lancashire who failed to raise his hat to his landlord. The landlord "rode furiously to him, struck him till his staff broke, and afterward beat him with his hands", vol. 1, 303.

[10]James Parnell, *The Watcher: or, the Stone cut out of the Mountain without Hands, Striking at the Feet of the Image*, (1655) in *A Collection of the Several Writings Given Forth from the Spirit of the Lord, through his Meek, Patient and Suffering Servant, James Parnell, who (though a Young Man) bore a Faithful Testimony for God, and dyed a Prisoner Under the Hands of a Persecuting Generation, in Colchester Castle, in the Year 1656*, (1675), 121-227, 171. The Quakers' extreme confidence in the success of their work was reflected in their letters to one another, e.g. Margaret Fell's epistle to Francis Howgill and others imprisoned in Appleby in 1653: "therefore look at the Lord alone, see him present with you, in his Spirit and power lifting up your heads above all your enemies." In *A Brief Collection of Remarkable Passages and Occurrences Relating to the Birth, Education, Life, Conversion, Travels, Services and Deep Sufferings of that Ancient, Eminent and Faithful Servant of the Lord, Margaret Fell... Together with Sundry of her Epistles, Books...*, (London: J. Sowle, 1710), 47-51, 51.

[11]Burrough, *To the Camp of the Lord in England*, in *Memorable Works*, (1655), 64-67, 67.

[12]James Nayler, *A Salutation to the Seed of God and a Call out of Babylon and Egypt*, (London: Giles Calvert, 1650), 23.

[13]The importance of the various offices of Christ in early Quaker thought was first pointed out by Lewis Benson, whose detailed reading of Fox's works led him to view Fox's doctrine as focused upon the understanding of Christ as prophet. See, for instance, *What did George Fox teach about Christ?*, New Foundation Publications, no. 1, (Gloucester: George Fox Fund, 1975).

[14]Fox, *Journal*, 51,52

[15]Ibid., 35.

[16]Fox, *The Lamb's Officer is Gone Forth with the Lamb's Message*, (1659), *Gospel Truth Demonstrated in a Collection of Doctrinal Books, given forth by that Faithful Minister of Jesus Christ, George Fox* (London: T. Sowle, 1708), 145-156, 145; John Perrot, *Immanuel the Salvation of Israel*, (London: Thomas Simmons, 1658), 3.

[17]Fox, *Journal*, 261. Such expectations were not confined to the lunatic fringes of seventeenth-century religious life. See Christopher

Hill, *Antichrist in Seventeenth-Century England*, 41st. Riddell Memorial Lectures, (London: Oxford University Press, 1971).

[18]Fox, *Journal*, 261. See also Richard Hubberthorne's assertion that "Paul did witness Christ's second coming which was in the Spirit... who did not preach any other Christ but that which was come and made manifest, and did never tell of Christ's second coming in person, nor of his personal reign". *The Innocency of the Righteous Seed of God cleared from all Slanderous Tongues and False Accusers*, (no printer's name, place or date), *A Collection of the Several Books and Writings of that Faithful Servant of God Richard Hubberthorne*, (London: William Warwick, 1663), 51-63, 55-56. Elsewhere Hubberthorne states that "Christ hath not a political and a spiritual kingdom; for the kingdom of Christ the heir of God, is but one which stands in righteousness, my kingdom is not of this world, saith Christ." *Truth and Innocency Clearing itself and its Children*, *Books and Writings*, 23-48, 28.

[19]Burrough, *The Standard of the Lord Revealed*, (1657), *Memorable Works*, 240-255, Chap. ix, "Concerning the Kingdom of Christ", 246.

[20]Howard Brinton, *The Religious Philosophy of Quakerism*, (Wallingford, Pennsylvania: Pendle Hill Publications, 1973), 68. Even if this had been the Quaker stance on the means of salvation, it would not have constituted blasphemy under the 1650 Blasphemy Act, which was designed to root out the Ranter errors of pantheism and antinomianism.

[21]Nayler and Fox, *Saul's Errand to Damascus*, quoted in Hugh Barbour and Arthur O. Roberts, eds., *Early Quaker Writers 1650-1700*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William E. Eerdman, 1973), 251-262, 261. See T.L. Underwood's "Early Quaker Eschatology", in *Puritans, the Millennium and the Future of Israel: Puritan Eschatology, 1600-1660*, Peter Toon, ed., (London: James Clarke, 1970), 91-103, 96: "The Quakers did not deny that the crucifixion of Christ was significant... However, they perceived that the outward, physical work of Christ in the past was of little consequence without an inward spiritual experience of Christ by men in the present." However, it by no means follows from this that, as Barry Reay suggests, "the implication was that the historic role of Christ was of little more import than the role of any leading Quaker." *The Quakers and the English Revolution*, (London: Temple Smith, 1985), 35.

[22]Jeanette Carter Gadt, "Women and Protestant Culture: The Quaker Dissent from Puritanism", (Ph.D. thesis, University of California, Los Angeles: 1974), 6.

[23]Both Penn and Barclay were, I believe, seeking to systematise the beliefs of earlier Quaker leaders, but at a time when the central compelling conviction of the first preachers (i.e. belief that the end of all things was at hand) had largely vanished. The writings of George Fox present their own special problem, for his works span some forty years, during which time his beliefs developed and were redefined in the face of persecution from outside, dissention within the movement, and a lack of fulfilment of his early eschatological vision. For a detailed description of Fox's eschatological beliefs see Gwyn, *Apocalypse*. Fox,

in my opinion, did not so much abandon his early vision as redefine his understanding of how it would be fulfilled.

[24]Brinton, *Religious Philosophy of Quakerism*, Introduction, xi. Melvin B. Endy's analysis of early Quakerism largely in terms of the works of Penn, Penington, Barclay and Fox is also limited, in that it overlooks the importance of the first Quaker prophets. *William Penn and Early Quakerism*, (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1973).

[25]John Owen, quoted in George Whitehead, *The Divinity of Christ, and the Unity of the Three that bear Record in Heaven*, (no printer's name or place, 1669), 57-58.

[26]See, for instance, James Nayler on election and reprobation, and on free will *Love to the Lost, and a Hand Held Forth to the Helpless, to Lead them out of the Dark*, (London: Giles Calvert, 1656), 32, 59.

[27]See, for instance, Gadt, "Women and Protestant Culture", which on more than one occasion betrays a failure to recognise the Biblical basis for a Quaker insight. E.g. in her discussion of Margaret Fell's *Women's Speaking Justified, Proved and Allowed of by the Scriptures*, (Facsimile reprint of 1666 edition, Amherst, Massachusetts: Mosher Book and Tract Committee, 1980), Gadt states that Fell "made women's procreative and mental powers (both defined as her 'seed') the pivotal feature of the future of the human race, of divinity on earth, and of the salvation of individuals," 157. The "seed" Fell refers to is without doubt the seed of the woman which will bruise the serpent's head, which in early Quaker thought primarily denoted Christ, not "women's procreative and mental powers".

[28]Fox, *An Epistle to all People on the Earth Showing the Ignorance of all the World, both Professors and Teachers, of the Birth that must be Silent, and of the Birth that is to Speak, (1657), in Gospel Truth Demonstrated*, 91-102, 99; Robert Barclay, *An Apology for the True Christian Divinity, as the same is held forth, and preached by the People, Called, in Scorn, Quakers*, (no printer's name or place, 1678), 246, 247.

[29]It is worth noting that Barclay dedicated his *Apology* to Charles II as a plea for liberty of conscience, which must have contributed to the more conciliatory tone of the work.

[30]For this reason I have left the punctuation and rambling structure of their writings largely untouched. The temptation to tidy up their style can so easily develop into the urge to tidy up their ideas as well, when it is often the vigorous heaping up of one thought upon another that best conveys the atmosphere in which they operated. Spelling has been modernised simply for convenience.

CHAPTER 1

THE WORK OF CHRIST IN EARLY QUAKER THOUGHT

Introduction

This chapter seeks to give an account of early Quaker thought about the work of Christ within the context of their distinctive eschatological outlook. Without this context, their statements about Christ seem confused and contradictory; sometimes appearing in the orthodox language of the Apostles' Creed,[1] yet at the other extreme seeming to deny the humanity of Christ, or to undermine the importance of the historical figure of Jesus. Their understanding of Christian history and their vision of the coming (and partially present) kingdom provide important aids to resolving these conflicts.

The work of Christ, the early Quakers believed, was to undo the effects of the fall. This led to their viewing of history in three ages: creation, fall and restoration. By his power Christ restored fallen humanity not only to pre-fall perfection, union with God, and dominion over the earth; but to a higher state -- that of Christ which would never fall. This was achieved by the earthly life and death of Jesus, which were central in early Quaker thought, although for polemical reasons the "outward" cross tended to recede from the foreground of their doctrine. The Quakers' apparent lack of concern for the outward events of salvation history, in contrast to their emphasis on the experience of the spiritual truth of such events, has its roots in their understanding of the apostasy. "Oh long hath been the night of ignorance and darkness, and great hath been the apostasy in the earth since the apostles' days," lamented one writer.[2] In spite of Christ's

atoning death, people continued to live in in the fall, in darkness, driven out from God's presence. Although the early Quakers held that the earthly life and death of Jesus were pivotal in salvation history, it was the dawning of the new age after the long night of apostasy which dominated their thoughts. This led to a rejection of purely objective models of atonement, and to specific attacks on the doctrines of satisfaction and imputed righteousness as expressed by their Calvinist opponents. "If I cannot witness Christ nearer than Jerusalem, I shall have no benefit by him", wrote James Nayler in 1652.[3] A belief in Christ's sufferings upon the cross was not sufficient to save. A profession of faith in Christ had to be accompanied by a changed life:

> Now it is an easy matter to make an outward profession of Christ's death, but it's another matter to come to die with Christ... For Christ comes to call sinners to repentance, and he died for their sin, not that they should live in it, and plead it for term of life.[4]

For the early Quakers, justification was not to be separated from sanctification. The "power of godliness" could overcome all sin; and this experience of perfection was the mark of the true restored church.

At times, then, the early Quakers viewed history as consisting of three ages. On other occasions, however, they saw history in two stages: the time of the Old Dispensation or Covenant, and the time of the New Dispensation of Christ. The Old Dispensation was sometimes divided further into four stages: from Adam to Moses, Moses (the time of the Law), the prophets, John the Baptist. Here, too, the dark night of the apostasy had intervened, for after the apostles, the church had slipped back into the ways and practices of the Old Covenant that Christ had come to fulfil and abolish. This led to an emphasis on Christ as the fulfilment of the shadows and types of the Old Covenant, and on his

role as heavenly high priest, and as heavenly prophet. It also produced a tendency to view all Scripture as having its fulfilment in Christ, New Testament as well as Old. An important example of this is the early Quaker interpretation of 1 Cor 14:35 ("If [women] will learn anything, let them ask their husbands at home") as referring to Christ, the bridegroom and husband of the church, of whom all believers, both male and female, were to learn.

These different views of salvation history were not in conflict with one another, for at the heart of early Quaker theology lay the belief that the dramatic experience of God's power, (which was the Christ's saving work in the human soul) signalled the end of the apostasy and the re-dawning of the gospel day. Their understanding of the apostasy, and the restoration of the true church in the Quaker movement, was superimposed on their other views of history. The central focus of early Quakerism was therefore the present and the imminent future, and as a direct result of this the early Quakers tended to use language that baffled and outraged their opponents. They blurred the roles of the Father, Son and Spirit; they appeared to use descriptions of the divine (Lord, Christ, Jesus, light, light of Christ, Spirit, power) indiscriminately and interchangeably; they freely interpreted scriptural narrative as prophecy of their own experience, and they heaped up biblical imagery (seed, light, measure, witness) as descriptions of Christ and his work within.

This complicates any attempt at providing an early Quaker doctrine of the work of Christ. The earliest Quakers were prophets rather than theologians, and their exhortations and warnings do not fall readily into conventional theological frameworks. This is not to say

that they lacked a coherent system of thought, although they certainly lacked a concise expression of it. Through the cumulative effect of their often rambling and repetitive writings, their central preoccupations become clear. Among these concerns was a desire to proclaim Christ as an all-powerful saviour conquering sin and the devil and restoring his people to perfection; and as a prophet and guide close at hand teaching his people, and not remote from them in heaven. The following sections are an attempt to provide a clear account of the Quaker understanding of the work of Christ from several different angles, through which their understanding of his nature emerges. This has necessitated some artificial divisions of subject matter; and it is important to bear in mind that for the early Quakers such careful distinctions were unnecessary.

Christ the Restorer

This section explores the work of Christ in undoing the effects of the fall, saving people from bondage to sin and Satan, and restoring them to perfection. Early Quaker writings provide a number of accounts of the creation and the fall. Some features remain more or less constant during the course of the second half of the Seventeenth Century; for example, exploration of the reasons for the creation, the nature of the image of God and the cause and effects of the Fall. These themes were not intimately bound up in the Quakers' eschatological outlook and consequently underwent little change with the disappearance of their early expectations. The idea of the restoration in Christ, however, was profoundly affected by the loss of the early vision. To what extent was the saving work of Christ to be realised on earth? The

later Quakers did not feel able to uphold the bold claims to perfection made by the first Quaker prophets.

Creation

> The Lord God of life and power, who is from everlasting to everlasting, according to the good pleasure of his own will, and after the counsel of his own heart, he brought forth a pure creation in his wisdom, and by his eternal living word.
>
> In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth, the sea and all living creatures, and the end of their creation was to serve, and manifest the glory and wisdom, power and goodness of God their creator, and for no other end were they created in the beginning, and that all his works of creation should be in subjection unto him, being ruled and governed by his pure righteous power, counsel and wisdom.[5]

Why did God create? The answer to this question is two-fold in early Quaker thought, as the above extracts show. Firstly, God created because he chose to do so: "according to the good pleasure of his own will"; and secondly, in order that the creation should show forth his divine attributes: "The end of their creation was to... manifest the glory and wisdom, power and goodness of God their creator." The creation, therefore, though material in substance, was wholly good: "he brought forth a pure creation".[6]

The creation of the human race was likewise wholly good, and intended to be the clearest manifestation of all God's various attributes. The following extracts from the works of several early Quakers illustrate the ways in which they believed that Adam and Eve reflected the nature of God:

> To the end that his wonders, and power, and goodness, and wisdom might be the more manifest, [God] endued man with a proportion of the same, that he himself is, even pure, wisdom, love, holiness truth, justice and goodness, or whatever might be named the properties and qualities of the creator, (mark) this was the end of God's creation (especially mankind) to set forth his own glorious virtues.[7]

> Here was man's station in the image of God, a living soul, a noble plant, wholly a right seed, filled with divine wisdom and virtue, clothed with innocency, covered with glory, adorned with celestial beauty in the continual enjoyment of the love and favour of the eternal being of beings.[8]

> In the beginning God made all things good, so did he man, whom he made in his own image, and placed in him his own wisdom and power, whereby he was completely furnished with dominion, power and authority, over the works of God's hands, knowing the nature and use of each creature, by what God had placed in him of himself; who in that state was the son of God...[9]

> [He] was made for his glory; and power and wisdom was given unto man to rule and govern in dominion, in righteousness, in wisdom over all living creatures, and was lord over all things, and had rule and authority over all the creation, and was steward over all things which the creator had made, who made all things for man, and made them subject unto him, to be ordered and governed by him, and used to his glory by whom they were made; and in that day when man was in the counsel of him that made him, and was subject to his will, he was blessed above all creatures... and was in perfect freedom over all things, to rule in the wisdom of God.[10]

This reflecting of God's attributes (power, purity, righteousness, wisdom, etc.) appears to be the sense in which the Quakers viewed man and woman as being created in God's image.[11] It displays a high view of humanity as it was originally created. This did not imply equality with God, although union with God was enjoyed until the fall. This union with God has to be examined in the light of the early Quaker anthropology, and this is a particularly hazy area of their thought, since most of the early Quaker writers did not trouble to speculate in any detail about such matters.

"The Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground," wrote Humphrey Smith in 1658, "and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul. So man was formed of that which was earthly, and into that which was earthly, that which was living was breathed."[12] It is not altogether clear whether Smith visualises two elements (body and soul), or three (body, soul and spirit). He seems

to imply that God breathes the living soul into the body, but it is also possible he means that the soul was already created and brought to life by the breath of God. Both interpretations can be supported by reference to other early Quaker writers, the latter view tending to be explored by writers of a more philosophical turn of mind. Writers seeming to imply that human nature consists of two elements include Charles Marshall: "[God] made man in his own image, formed him of the dust of the ground, and breathed into him the breath of life"; George Bishop: "Now this eternal thing in you all, is the soul (God breathed into man the breath of life, and man became a living soul)"; Richard Hodden: "This living soul is not any corporeal substance, but a life invisible, (as God is invisible) for it is of the breath of God, and so is God's"; and Edward Burrough: "of the dust of the ground were you made, and into man was breathed the breath of life; from the living power which formed all things; and man was made a living soul".[13] Writers suggesting three elements in human nature include William Smith: "[man's] living soul stood in his living virtue; and the breath of life was always reaching to it;... so the breath of life was breathed, and in it the soul lived, and was in perfect unity with it"; and Samuel Fisher: "Man (as God first made him) was a creature consist[ing] of these three, namely, body, soul, and spirit;... First,... the outward earthly body, which was formed of the dust,... the soul,... Thirdly: as to the spirit of man, which is the best, highest, and most able of the three aforesaid... it is the breath of life which God breathed into his soul".[14] The writers giving the simplest account of human nature are merely following the Genesis text: "And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life;

and man became a living soul." (Gen 2:7). Smith's and Fisher's position indicates their more sophisticated turn of mind rather than a fundamental disagreement about human nature among the early Quakers. The difference is in fact of small importance, since what is significant is that into the body created from the dust, something of God -- distinct and different -- was breathed. In this the man and the woman lived and had unity with God, until the fall disrupted the order God had created.

The Fall

Early Quaker descriptions of the fall are full of language of "going forth" from one state and "entering" another. They seem to be saying that the fall was not simply brought about by disobedience, but that a state separate from God already existed, and that it was entered through disobedience. This state was often described in terms of being driven into the earth;[15] or as "[entering] into visible glories, pleasures and things", going out into the "vanity" or "into the self-inventions".[16] It was contrary to God and therefore the province of Satan, as Edward Burrough noted in 1659:

> It is written, The Devil abode not in the truth, but went out of the truth; and he is the king of death, and hath the power of it; he went out of the power of God, and out of the life, by which all things was made and created, and abode not in the truth, nor in the life, to live and act and speak in that; but desired to be, and became to be something of himself without God; and he spoke of himself, and acted of himself, without the power and life, and also contrary to the power and life of the creator, being separated from it, and became distinct in being of himself, having a kingdom of his own to promote in opposition to the kingdom of God.[17]

The work of Satan was to "draw out the simple mind" so that it "looked

out into the other [ie. state] where he rules who abides not in the

truth".[18] Once this had happened, disobedience inevitably followed, or as one writer puts it: "man went out into the disobedience".[19] Some writers emphasise the role of the Serpent's deception in the fall:

> And of the fruit which was not good for food [the serpent] gave the woman to eat, and was conceived in the woman, and got power over the woman, and she did eat, and entered into him who was the power of death, and acted by his power and deceived the man, so they both fell from God... First the woman was deceived, then the man.
>
> Now this was the Serpent's seed... that at the beginning sprang up in the mind, with a deceivable promise of being wise, and knowing of himself, lifting up above, and without respect of subjection to his creator, so from this root grew pride, selfishness and earthly wisdom, and disobedience to every good motion of that holy righteous power, by which he was created.[20]

However, as the last passage indicates, the responsibility for the fall rests squarely on the shoulders of the woman and the man who of their own free choice put themselves in a position where they were vulnerable to temptation. This is expressed forcibly by Edward Burrough:

> Man transgressed the power that made him, and went forth from its counsel, and contrary to its will, and grieved it and vexed it, till it became his enemy to fight against him, and to curse him; for he had transgressed against it, by feeding on that part which he should not, with the knowledge of things, and so he became wise, and lost uprightness, and touched that which the power that made him had forbidden, and so his mind and heart adulterated from the creator into the visible glories, pleasures and things which were less than himself, and so he became unprofitable to his maker, by transgressing against him, and only profitable to himself, to feed and nourish, and delight and please himself in the outward creation and forget the power that made him, and thus being with his mind turned into the earth, there the evil entered; and the devil overcame him with his temptation, and the power of earthly darkness gained dominion over him.[21]

The evidence seems to suggest that the early Quakers saw the fall as a "looking out into", or an "entering into" a state contrary to God. The act of disobedience in eating of the forbidden tree was simply the concrete proof that the man and woman had chosen the other state. This has implications for the early Quaker understanding of Christ's work in

undoing the fall, (see below, 38-42). According to James Nayler, God placed the choice between life and death, obedience and disobedience, blessing and curse, election and reprobation, in the garden of Eden from the first. These choices were symbolised by the two trees: the tree of life, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. As long as the man and the woman remained in union with God, they were protected from sin:

> and these [two trees] was good for man in their place, whilst man stood in his place, guided by that which placed him in the good, and forewarned him of the knowledge and gave him power against it, whilst he stood in that will, which had set all things in their place, which will was free for God, and from sin; and the will of God and the will of man was one, and so at unity with all the creation.

Power over sin was lost when "man looked out into the other":

> And [he] grew subtle in himself, and wise to do evil, so that he lost the will that was free, to wait upon God in his wisdom and counsel, freely to be carried forth by him, and so from the uprightness and innocency, and pure wisdom and spiritual power, which God had placed in his heart, he fell, into the self-inventions which he had chosen in the contrary will.[22]

Although sin in the first instance was a conscious choice, an act of will, the Quakers did not conclude from this that it lay within human grasp to reverse the fall through obedience and a conscious choosing of right. The writings of the early Quakers provide little evidence to support the view of some scholars that the early Friends held an optimistic view of human nature.[23] Their optimism lay rather in their view of the implications of Christ's work for the human soul *in its earthly life*. The effects of the fall on the human race were so catastrophic that it lay beyond the scope of men and women to help themselves. The way back to Paradise was guarded by the flaming sword, for "now man is in the alienated estate in the separation, gone from his

maker."[24]

This alienated estate meant that "[man had] lost also his union, and communion and fellowship with the Lord... and was driven out from the presence of the Lord into the earth."[25] Loss of union with God was described by some writers in terms of an emerging human self-consciousness:

> After he had transgressed, and was afraid of God, when he saw his nakedness, and hid himself, (mark), [man] had a self now to hide after transgression; then 'twas I heard thy voice, and was afraid, here was a division and separation, (I and thy, twain).[26]

This is similar to Edward Burrough's account of the Devil's going out from the truth: "[he] desired to be... something of himself without God... and became distinct in being of himself", (see above, 34). The emergence of the Devil as a distinct being brought into existence a state separate from God; and in choosing to join this state, the man and the woman became distinct from God as well, losing their "unity" with him. This loss of unity threw the created order into disarray, as it implied not only separation, but also disunity, disorder and disharmony. The power, authority, purity and wisdom in which the image of God consisted were lost, and instead man and woman became subject to "the creatures". This idea recurs in early Quaker writings:

> he lost his dominion over the creatures, and they gained dominion over him, to serve and worship them, who became captive with his mind, to be ruled by them in vanity and in evil.
>
> he was driven out from the presence of the Lord into the earth, and lost his power and dominion, his fall being so great the creatures have had power and dominion over the creature man, and man hath been in bondage to the creatures.
>
> Man having lost the authority in which he ruled over the creatures, he is fallen under the power of darkness, and the serpent hath weakened him, and set the creatures over him, and then leads him to commit evil in the use of the creatures.[27]

James Nayler took this thought one stage further: "man hath lost his dominion over the Devil, by letting him in", and "become brutish in his understanding";[28] falling into "a dark, feeble and wretched estate, like the beast that perisheth", his pure love being turned into "a filthy, beastly love and liking of himself and the creatures".[29] "He became an earthly man, with an earthly, carnal mind, that was at enmity with God, and [had] an earthly wisdom, sensual and devilish, in which the serpent stood exalted".[30] The full extent of the fall was clear to the early Quaker mind: "Oh, miserable change! Oh deplorable alteration! Oh lamentable state, undeclarable undone condition, unexpressible fall!" as were its implications for the entire human race: "here is the state of the whole world, in transgression afraid of God, drove from God into the earth, hiding and covering self, and loving and embracing that which God will destroy."[31] In this wretched state the human race was condemned to remain until the work of Christ undid the effects of the fall.

The Restoration

For the early Quakers, Christ was the all-powerful conqueror of sin and Satan. Unlike the devil and fallen humans, Christ the Second Adam "abode in the truth", resisted temptation, thereby overcoming evil and ultimately death. Christ was the way back to God and, in Quaker thought, to the state Adam and Eve enjoyed before the fall. Any virtue or privilege attached to the innocent state was available again to those restored in Christ, for he was able to redeem

> out of the curse, out of the world, out of the fall into Paradise from whence man fell; and from under his power who is the strength of the fall, to serve him [i.e. Christ], to follow him, to walk in his light, to receive the light of life, and makes them of the seed which hath power to come through the cherubims and the flaming sword, into the garden unto the tree of life, and to eat of it and

live forever.[32]

The "Christus victor" model of atonement, was an important strand in early Quaker theology, (though by no means the Quakers' only way of describing Christ's work).[33] The concern of the early Friends was predictably not with the mechanics of the atonement -- how Christ destroyed the Devil -- but with the effects of his victory in the present. As we have seen, the early Quakers believed that man and woman were endowed at creation with attributes that reflected God's nature -- "pure, wisdom, love, holiness, truth, justice and goodness", and had "dominion, power and authority, over the works of God's hands" and unity with God. All these attributes were restored, together with unity with God and with the creation, as the believer was brought by Christ not only to the pre-fall state, but to the state of Christ himself. Power over sin could again be known, as Christ "the seed of the woman" spoken of in Genesis, had bruised the serpent's head. The idea of a full restoration in Christ was an important Quaker tenet, and one worked out in some detail by earliest Quaker writers. One interesting belief (which was not destined to survive in Quaker thought) was the belief that before the fall "man... [knew] the nature and use of each creature"[34]. If this was the case, then it was a power that the restored believer could also expect to enjoy. George Fox claimed that:

> the creation was opened to me, and it was showed me how all things had their names given them according to their nature and virtue. And I was at a stand in my mind whether I should practise physic for the good of mankind, seeing the nature and virtue of the creatures were so opened to me by the Lord.[35]

The nature of this knowledge was primarily an experience for Fox. The creation was "opened" to him, and the word "opening" was synonymous with revelation in Fox's thought. This extract occurs in Fox's well-known

passage about his profound experience of coming in the Spirit "through the flaming sword into the Paradise of God". Later Quakers did not share the intensity of Fox's vision, and were more cautious in making claims for the pre-fall state and also for their own experience of salvation and restoration. The same idea of "unity with creation" was mentioned by James Nayler in *Love to the Lost*. The reason for its importance to the first Quakers is hinted at by Fox in a curious incident recorded in his *Journal*:

> And so after the meeting was done I passed away to John Audland's and there came John Story to me, and lighted his pipe of tobacco, and, said he, 'Will you take a pipe of tobacco', saying, 'Come, all is ours'; and I looked upon him to be a forward, bold lad. Tobacco I did not take, but it came into my mind that the lad might think I had not unity with the creation, for I saw he had a flashy, empty notion of religion; so I took his pipe and put it to my mouth and gave it to him again to stop him lest his rude tongue should say I had not unity with the creation.[36]

The significant phrase here is Story's "Come, all is ours". The same words were used by a Ranter to Fox in 1655, (*Journal*, 195), and we see in the extract above Fox's determination that the Quakers should not be seen to have a lesser revelation than the Ranters, "it came into my mind that the lad might think I had not unity with the creation." The connection with Ranterism may also have contributed to the disappearance of this strand of thought.

Belief in victory over sin was not abandoned, although later Quakers drew back from the unambiguous claim to personal perfection which characterised early Quaker thought. Perfection of the believer on earth was one of the most unpopular beliefs which the early Quakers derived from their understanding of Christ's work. One opponent was provoked to test this claim for himself, as Fox records in his *Journal*: "[A] Friend, one John Lawson held perfection, and Thomas Briggs said

unto him, 'Dost thou hold perfection?' and he up with his hand and would have struck the Friend a box on the ear."[37] Briggs "came to be convinced" that day; but for many, this claim was simply a proof of the Quakers' arrogance and error. The Quakers, in return, were scathing in their condemnation of those who "pleaded for sin", demanding to know

> Whether Christ is but a part of a redeemer; or a perfect and full redeemer; and which is the place betwixt heaven and earth where man shall be made free and cleansed from sin, if not upon earth? Seeing that no unholy nor unclean thing can enter the kingdom of God.[38]

The source of this disagreement is to be found in the Quakers' highly realised eschatology. There was little or no tension between the "already" and the "not yet" in their understanding of salvation as it related to the soul, (although they still awaited the imminent fulfilment of their hopes throughout the wider creation). Their experience led them to believe that the full benefits of Christ's atonement were being witnessed in their midst. This was to become the cornerstone of George Fox's defence of women's meetings (see below, Chapter 4). By the 1670s he was articulating his belief that the equal sharing of men and women in the image of God was part of the pre-fall state, and therefore of the restored state as well: "men and women were meet-helps (before they fell) and the image of God and righteousness and holiness; and so they are to be again in the restoration by Christ Jesus."[39]

Although the Quakers spent little time exploring how Christ had overcome the Devil in his earthly life, they had a great deal to say about the way in which Christ overcame sin in the human soul. It is primarily in this context that the early Quakers spoke of the light.

Christ the Light

Much has been written on the subject of the light in Quaker thought, and no description of Quaker theology would be complete without an attempt to define what the early Quakers meant when they spoke of the light. This account focuses on their understanding of the light as it relates most closely to their early eschatological outlook. Speculation about the light as a philosophical concept or mystical experience unconnected with the historical Jesus was not part of early Quaker thought. Whatever doubts later Quakers may have had about the relevance of the figure of Jesus to salvation, these were not shared by the first Quakers. The main emphasis here is therefore not on the nature and origin of the light but on the *activity* of the light, and this reflects the primary concerns of the earliest Quakers.

In his earthly life and atoning death, Christ conquered sin and evil, thereby restoring the human race in himself to the state of pre-fall perfection. The work of the Second Adam undid the fall of the first Adam. This was already achieved in a sense, but awaited realisation as the individual came out of the old Adam to Christ to be transformed. Just as the state of transgression existed before the fall and was entered by Adam and Eve; so the new state in Christ already existed -- brought about by his earthly life and death -- and could be entered. Fox visualised this state as "more steadfast... than Adam's in innocency, even... a state in Christ Jesus, that should never fall."[46] At this point talk about the light becomes relevant, as it was Christ the light who was able to lead people from one state to another.

> Now there is no people upon the earth come from the first Adam's state in the earth, drove from God in sin, and death, and unrighteousness, to the second Adam's state, but who come to the light that enlighteneth everyone that cometh into the world: they

that will not come to the second Adam from the first Adam, they will not come to the Lord from heaven who is the way to the Father. So they that are not come to the light which doth enlighten everyone that cometh into the world, they are in the first state drove from God, from his righteousness, from his wisdom, from the truth, the light, the life, for Christ the light, which doth enlighten every man that cometh into the world, who is the way to the Father, the truth, the life, the light, God's wisdom, God's righteousness, the hope of glory, and the power of God, the redemption, the teacher and the saviour, who doth enlighten every man that cometh into the world, for they do not own that, being out of God's wisdom in the devilish, that is both earthly and sensual.[41]

Why was the light so important for the early Quakers in this process? The answer to this lies partly in the early Quakers' debt to preceding sects whose emphasis on the Spirit and the Light paved the way for the dramatic appearance and growth of the Quaker movement;[42] but also in the Quakers' desire to demonstrate that they were the true church restored by Christ after the long night of apostasy. Imagery of light contrasted starkly with the darkness both of the fall and of the apostasy. To be a "child of the light" meant to have the "power of godliness", not merely the "form". The "power of godliness" was power over sin -- Christ's power, as Christ was "the power of God", (see passage quoted above). The key was belief in Christ and obedience to him. Acts of obedience were proof that the believer had entered the new state, in the same way that an act of disobedience bore witness to the the entry into the state of the fall. As the believer listened to the voice of Christ in the heart, power was given to obey. This was the opposite process to Eve's and Adam's listening to the voice of the serpent in the garden of Eden. According to the Quakers, Christ's conquering of the Devil had dealt both with the state of sin, and also with individual sinful acts; and both these benefits were to be enjoyed by his people on earth. This marked the Quaker community out in a world

of "professors" who denied "the power of godliness" and exalted the "form".

Although "light" was only one of several images (eg. Spirit, seed, measure, witness, prophet, teacher, "that of God" in everyone, etc.), used by the early Quakers to describe their experience of Christ's voice and presence within, it came to be one of their most important metaphors, being drawn from the Johannine material of the New Testament. The nature of light, for instance, was to reveal: "Every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God." [John 3:20,21., King James Version]. The light could be identified with Christ: "Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." [John 8:12]. The light was universal, in that it lightened every one, ("the true light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world", John 1:9); and this meant that all alike were called to the judgment seat, because of the crisis brought about by the eschatological presence of Christ: "He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil." [John 3:19,20].[43] These aspects of the light -- the light as revelation, the light as Christ himself, the light as universal and the light as a bringer of judgment -- are all relevant in the restoration from the state of the old Adam to that of the Second Adam, from darkness to

Christ's "glorious light".

What was the first step towards restoration? According to the early Quakers it was a turning away from the "outward" -- human teachers, the "bare letter" of Scripture, visible church structures and practices -- to hear the voice of Christ/the light speaking in the heart. "Why gad you abroad?" asked Francis Howgill in 1656:

> Why trim yourselves with the saints words, when you are ignorant of the life? Return, return to him that is the first love, and the first born of every creature, who is the light of the world, which light will show you back again is the way off the mountains of leanness and poverty, where you feed upon wind and husks: and now return home to within, sweep your houses all; the groat is there; the little leaven is there; the grain of mustard seed you will see, which the kingdom of God is like.[44]

This "returning home to within" was a step of faith. In order for the saving work of the light to become effective, it had to be believed, received and loved. Although the light enlightened everyone coming into the world, it was not recognised as a saving light by everyone. To the opponents of Quakerism, the claims made by the early Friends for the light seemed outrageous.[45] John Bunyan attacked Edward Burrough on this point in 1657: "thou mayest call thy conscience the man Christ Jesus, or the Light (as thou callest it) in thy conscience the man Christ Jesus; which if thou do, this is a delusion, and a dangerous doctrine."[46] For Bunyan, salvation was not achieved by any light within, but by the work of Christ on the cross "without" (see note 46); but this doctrine was as abhorrent to the Quakers as theirs was to Bunyan. Another writer wrote vehemently on the subject:

> I say whoever preacheth to people of a saviour without them, while the light of Christ condemns within them... and of redemption of the soul wrought without them, though their sins remaineth in them, and that rest cannot be known, until their outward visible bodies be laid in the grave; I charge all such in the name of the Most High God, to be horrible blasphemers, and ministers, and messengers of

the Devil.[47]

The light was given to all people, the early Quakers believed, but by no means all received it. The light had a dual appearance: "[it] is given you from Christ Jesus, unto life eternal, or unto condemnation everlasting."[48] The entire human race was in the darkness of the fall, but there was an opportunity given to all to respond to the light/Christ. Margaret Fell described this in an epistle to Friends in 1653:

> The light which comes from Jesus Christ, which is the messenger of the living God, sent from God, may bring your souls out of Egypt, and out of the Fall, from under the curse, which disobedience hath brought upon all men. Dear hearts, this is the day of your visitation, and salvation, if you be faithful and obedient.[49]

Many, however, rejected the opportunity given them:

> [All] have such a day of visitation, that they may return out of the state of reprobation; but hating knowledge and despising the love of God, they continue in the state reprobate, and the wrath of God abides upon them.[50]

Those who did respond to the light had first to believe that it was from Christ, and that it was a saving light. Many rejected the voice of the light because of its humble appearance.[51] Howgill (see above, 45), deliberately chose the imagery of small things for the light from the parables of Jesus -- the groat, the little leaven, the mustard seed -- to show how easy it was for the first beginnings of the kingdom to be overlooked. Response entailed humility. All human and devilish wisdom had to be abandoned for the soul to wait in the light until Christ led it up out of the fall to God again. "Wait in silence and faithfulness, and obedience," wrote Margaret Fell, "wait patiently, and you shall have the light of life... And be still and low, that you may receive the teachings of the Lord; and learn of him who is low and meek,

and hearken diligently and keep your minds to the light, that so your souls may live." This was echoed by George Fox: "the first step of peace is to stand still in the light".[52]

Once the step of standing still in the light was taken, the full extent of the state of sin could be revealed. The light, wrote George Fox, "discovers things contrary to it",[53] and those waiting humbly in the light were able to accept its condemnation of their sin. Others "rebel[led] against the light, know[ing] not the ways of it, nor abid[ing] in the paths of it." For such people the light would be their condemnation: "my faithful witness, the light in your conscience, which hath been eye witness of your villainy against me, shall testify against you, and shall accuse you guilty of [sic] everlasting torment except you repent".[54] Those who did abide in the light saw not only their sinful state, but also their saviour and way back to God again: "believing in the light which will let you see your sins, with it you will see the Lamb of God which takes away sins".[55] If the voice of Christ the light was obeyed, the soul could be led out of the fall into the restoration. Margaret Fell exhorted people to "let their minds be turned into the Lord God his light in their consciences, whereby they may turn from their dark and fallen state, to follow Christ Jesus, and so not abide in darkness, who is come to teach them himself".[56] "Return into that from which you are gone out," wrote James Nayler, "that by the light that's in the midst of all this darkness and death, you may be led in again by the blood of the cross, through the fire and sword, into the garden of God where he plants and feeds."[57]

The path from the fall back to paradise was the way of the cross. This meant death to the fleshly fallen nature and the raising to

life of the spiritual nature that had died in the fall,[58] and this could only come about as the heart heard and obeyed the voice of the light. It was a continuous process: "by his light revealed in you... you will see your teacher not removed into a corner, but present when you are upon your beds, and about your labour; convincing, instructing, leading, correcting, judging, and giving peace to all who love and follow him."[59] The power to resist sin and overcome the evil one was to be waited for in the light: "[let all] wait in that light that comes from Christ," advised William Dewsbury, "... for the power of Jesus Christ to destroy sin, and to guide them in obedience to the light, so shall they come to know the only true God and father of light in Christ Jesus, who is the way to him."[60] Victory over sin was not instantaneous, however:

> [man] beginneth to call in question many things that he hath lived in; and the light discovers them to be of the unclean nature, and man begins to dislike them, and he cannot so delight in them as he hath done in times past, but begins to be serious, and to wait in the light which doth discover them... and by attending to the light, and obeying the light which makes them manifest, he receives some power against them, and begins to get some victory over them... and as he obeys it, there is a cord of love cast about him, to draw him and convert him; and here the Lord worketh the conversion, and man is converted.[61]

The early Quakers expressed clearly what the goal of salvation was -- perfection -- and that this goal was to obtained by believers on earth:

> Now your faith which leads you not to believe that you can ever be freed from sin, this faith is reprobate... O what righteousness is that you lay hold of, which is imperfect, and leads not out of imperfection?
>
> We believe that the saints upon earth may receive forgiveness of sins, and may be perfectly freed from the body of sin and death, and in Christ may be perfect, and without sin, and may have victory over all temptations by faith in Christ Jesus. And we believe every saint that is called of God, ought to press after perfection, and to overcome the Devil and all his temptations upon earth; and we believe they that faithfully wait for it shall obtain it, and be presented without sin in the image of the father, and such walks not after the flesh, but after the Spirit, and are in covenant with God, and their sins are blotted out, and remembered no more; for they

cease to commit sin, being born of the seed of God.[62]

In the early days of the movement, teaching on perfection was not tempered by the suggestion that it would not be fully achieved this side of the grave. True believers were "in Christ". They had come out of the fall and the "imperfection", and had entered the perfect state.[63] The sinful state had been done away with by Christ, and what remained was the overcoming of individual sinful acts, the resistance of individual temptations, in the daily life of the believer. The light/Christ revealed the nature of sin and temptation and gave the power to obey and overcome. The believer waited humbly for the voice of the light, suppressing all human thoughts and promptings, and obeyed the light in all things, both small and large. The light might speak suddenly and unexpectedly, or after a great deal of patient, silent waiting. Obedience to the light was the key to perfection; and while perfection was viewed in these terms, it was possible for the early Quakers to believe that they were achieving it. Time was short, for the great crisis of history was upon them, and the kingdom of God was appearing in their midst with power. When the eschatological vision dimmed during the 1670s and 1680s and it became clear that the Quakers were going to have to survive in a hostile world rather than convert that entire world to God, perfection become a less palatable doctrine. Dealings with the world in trade and legal matters were no longer temporary measures, and if the movement was to survive the early dogmatic stance needed tempering. When Barclay set about writing his *Apology*, the doctrine of perfection was noticeably diminished:

> I will nevertheless not deny that there may be a state attainable in this life, in which to do righteousness may become so natural to the regenerate soul, that in the stability of this condition they cannot sin. Others may perhaps speak more certainly of this state, as

having arrived at it. For me I shall speak modestly, as acknowledging myself not to have arrived at it, yet I dare not deny it, for that it seems so positively to be asserted by the Apostle, in these words, 1John 3:9, He that is born of God, sinneth not, neither can he, because the Seed of God remaineth in him.[64]

Another reason behind Barclay's reluctance to deny perfection might well have been that it was "so positively asserted" by the early Quaker leaders, too. He felt obliged to include the doctrine in his *Apology*, although it clearly struck no answering chord in his own experience. Belief in perfection relied on an all-consuming experience of Christ and a vivid sense of the approaching end of all things.

Barclay's more modest claims were a step closer to the beliefs of the early Quakers' Puritan contemporaries. The spiritual journals of the Puritans reveal a profound conviction that the best of human actions and the purest of human motives were tainted by sin; and that nobody could claim complete freedom from sin in this life. The Quakers would have agreed with this estimation of *human* actions and motives, but would still have claimed complete freedom from sin themselves. This sprang from their belief that it was Christ acting and working and "willing" within them: "if any work be wrought in us, in the strength and power of grace, and not in our own strength, then it is the work of Christ in us, the work of God's own righteousness." This was how the Quakers attempted to rebut the accusation that they relied on salvation by works. James Nayler expressed the early Quaker position clearly in 1656:

> God accepts no will but his own, and this he begets by his Spirit in all who wait upon him in the light of Jesus, and with such he that begets the will, begets the deed also; and it is no more what we can, but what he will with whom all things are possible, and we can do all things that he wills, through him that is in us, so the will of God is done in us by his power (in our measure) as it is in heaven, and this is perfect righteousness, where Christ is all, and

the creature nothing.[65]

The state of perfect righteousness where "Christ is all, and the creature nothing" was to be found by waiting in the light of Jesus. In this state Christ the light was witnessed working and speaking among his people as the heavenly high Priest, the Prophet, teacher, Lord and King.

Christ the Substance of the Old Dispensation

"[Christ is] the everlasting substance of all shadows pertaining to the first covenant, and hath finished them and ended them." "The Jews' temple and ordinances were signs of good things to come, and when the substance was come the saints denied the shadows and figures."[66] This was an essential part of the early Quakers' understanding of the work of Christ. As we have seen, they tended to view history as consisting of different "ages" -- sometimes three: the creation, the fall and the restoration in Christ; and sometimes two: the age of the Old Dispensation, and the age of the New Dispensation.[67] In this context the idea of two ages dominates.

The belief that Christ was the "substance" (by which the early Quakers appear to have meant the "reality") of the shadows, figures and types of the Old Dispensation clearly owes a great deal to the Epistle to the Hebrews. The writer to the Hebrews describes the Law as "a shadow of good things to come", or an "example and shadow of heavenly things", demonstrating that the Old Covenant was imperfect and changeable, therefore requiring a second and better covenant to replace it.[68] This New Covenant was mediated by Christ. The early Quakers took up this theme and worked out in detail its implications for worship and church government. If Christ was truly the everlasting High Priest,

then the old order of priests that took tithes had been abolished. Payment of tithes in the Seventeenth Century was therefore anomalous. Many hundreds of Quakers were imprisoned for refusing to pay either tithes, or the fines imposed for non-payment; and many others had goods seized far in excess of the original value of the tithe.[69] In a similar way the early Friends rejected any notion of an outward tabernacle in the New Covenant. Where others in the Seventeenth Century referred to a building as "the church", the Quakers were quick to call it a "steeple house". Their own places of worship were known simply as meeting houses, since the true Church was the people of God.

Although this type of attitude was not confined to the early Quakers, the thoroughness with which they worked out the details of this idea is distinctive. For them, anything pertaining to the Old Covenant -- the temple building, the Levitical priesthood, the worship, the Law and the prophets -- found an equivalent in the New Covenant, and had its fulfilment in Christ. It is in the work of George Fox that some of the best examples of this kind of thought are to be seen. His *A Clear Distinction Between the Old Covenant, or Old Testament, and the New Covenant, or Testament* is devoted to demonstrating that the New Dispensation differed from, and replaced, the Old. The following condensed version of the tract is an attempt to clarify Fox's argument:[70]

The Old Covenant	The New Covenant
For Jews	For Jews, Gentiles and all Nations
From Sinai	Law of life from heavenly Sion
A "thing decayed", having "many outward things"	"Christ hath abolished all outward things"

The Priests' lips to preserve people's knowledge	Christ's lips to preserve people's knowledge
Law written on stone	Law written in heart
Sanctuary, tabernacle, temple	Bodies of believers = temple of God -- outward temple abolished
High Priest lights candles, lamps, in temple	Christ lightens every man's spirit with his heavenly light
Sacrifices, offerings	Christ offered himself once for all and ends outward sacrifices
Aaronic priesthood	Christ = everlasting High Priest after the order of Melchizedec
Priests lived in chambers in temple	Christ lives in the chambers of the heart
Feast of Passover	Jews in spirit pass out of spiritual Egypt and feed on Christ the heavenly Passover
Priesthood of one tribe	All believers priests, both male and female
Circumcision in flesh -- by priests	Circumcision of spirit -- by Christ
Outward death to those resisting High Priest or Moses	Eternal death for those resisting Christ the heavenly high priest and prophet
Spirit poured out on House of Israel	Spirit poured out on all flesh
Observation of days, months, feasts, etc.	Observation of days, etc. abolished, -- heavenly feast, day of Christ
Sabbath	Eternal rest and day of Christ
Swearing of oaths	Christ the oath of God abolishes swearing
Moses = leader of outward Jews	Christ = leader and commander of his people, and calls all people
Of natural and outward things	Of inward and spiritual things

Three important strands are interwoven here. Firstly, there is a broadening of the scope of the Covenant. No longer was it restricted

to "outward Jews", or the house of Israel, but was open instead to all, since all could become "Jews in spirit" and part of the spiritual Israel. Christ the heavenly High Priest had lightened all people with his saving light, and called them all out of spiritual Egypt to share in his salvation.[71] This is closely linked to a second strand of thought in which the old emphasis on "natural and outward things" is replaced with a concern for "inward and spiritual things". This strand of thought was destined to become dominant in Quakerism when the eschatological dimension to Quaker beliefs had vanished, (see below, Chap. 3). It may be seen here in the way Fox contrasts the outward sabbath with the concept of "eternal rest" in the day of Christ, or the outward oil for anointing with Christ's inward anointing with the Spirit. In fact, Fox seems able to find an inner, spiritual equivalent in Christ for any practice or element in the Old Covenant, and he does so without appearing to strain his material. His effortless making of connections must spring from his deep-rooted belief in Christ as the "substance", the underlying reality, the true and perfect "pattern" of which the Old Dispensation was a shadowy reflection, and to which the prophets bore testimony. This is the final strand of thought: Christ, the fulfiller of the Old Covenant and the bringer of the New.

"Christ is all".[72] For the early Quakers, anything in the Old Covenant that could be described as mediating grace was to be found fulfilled in Christ. This is to say that anything that in some way reflected, symbolised, or stood for or in place of God; or conveyed a sense of his presence and purposes in the Old Covenant (e.g. the law, the temple building and worship, with its priesthood and sacrifices) was to be found fulfilled in the New Covenant in Christ. Anything that

operated symbolically as God in the world (e.g. King, judge, commander, prophet, priest) was also summed up in Christ.

> [Christ] is our way, our truth, and our life, resurrection, sanctification, wisdom and justification, and our redeemer, saviour and mediator betwixt us and God;... who was the foundation of the prophets and apostles... our restorer..., heavenly shepherd,... our prophet,... our priest made higher than the heavens,.. the holy head of the church, our heavenly bishop,... our leader, counsellor and commander.[73]

Christ was the sole mediator of the New Covenant, and the early Quakers would allow nothing to detract from his complete mediation -- neither the Scriptures, nor human teachers and priests, nor church structures and practices. None of these things could mediate grace in themselves. Without the living witness of Christ in the heart, the Scriptures could not speak. The true function of preaching was to bring people to the point where they could hear Christ's voice within, and had no further need of outward teachers. The true church was not to mediate grace so much as to be the place where Christ could mediate the New Covenant unhindered, speaking to his people, guiding them and perfecting them for the day when the wedding feast of the Lamb would be known. This was the vision that fired George Fox:

> With and by this divine power and spirit of God, and the light of Jesus, I was to bring people off from all their own ways to Christ, the new and living way, and from their churches, which men had made and gathered, to the Church in God, the general assembly written in heaven, which Christ is the head of, and off from the world's teachers made by men, to learn of Christ, who is the way, the truth, and the life... and off from all the world's worships, to know the spirit of truth in the inward parts, and to be led thereby,... And I was to bring them off from all the world's fellowships, and prayings and singings, which stood in forms without power, that their fellowships might be in the Holy Ghost, and in the eternal Spirit of God; that they might pray in the Holy Ghost, and sing in the spirit and with the grace that comes by Jesus...
>
> And I was to bring people off from Jewish ceremonies, and from heathenish fables, and from men's inventions and windy doctrines, by which they blowed the people about this way and the other way, from sect to sect; and all their beggarly rudiments, with their schools and colleges for making ministers of Christ, who are indeed

ministers of their own making but not of Christ's; and from all their images and crosses, and sprinkling of infants, with all their holy days (so called) and all their vain traditions, which they had gotten up since the apostles' days, which the Lord's power was against...

> In this free spirit of the Lord Jesus was I sent forth to declare the word of life and reconciliation freely, that all might come up to Christ, who gives freely, and who renews up into the image of God which man and woman were in before they fell, that they might sit down in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.[74]

One of the logical outworkings of this position was a rejection of any "outward" form of baptism and the Lord's supper. Early Quakers were apt to class both these in the same category as the practices of the Old Covenant:

> The light of the world who hath finished his work in the outward things, to wit, circumcision, baptism, the supper, and death on the cross without the gate, and is now revealed within, and worketh all our works in us.
>
> Is not Christ the ordinance, and the end of all ordinances?... Is not he the Sabbath, circumcision, baptism, the supper? etc. are not all these in him? and doth not he administer all these in Spirit to everyone who comes to him? and so the shadow is come into the substance the end of all shadows.[75]

In the New Covenant Christ was all, and his ministry was within the heart and in the midst of his gathered people. "Outward" celebrations of the Lord's supper, or baptism in water, were therefore completely inappropriate. This position was more difficult to defend than their rejection of Old Testament practices. The early Quakers justified their belief by referring to the words of John the Baptist: "I indeed baptise you with water; but one mightier than I cometh... he shall baptise you with the Holy Ghost and with fire" [Luke 3:16]. This was the true baptism of the New Covenant. The baptism of John belonged more properly to the Old Covenant since he was the last in the line of the Old Covenant prophets. Baptism by the Holy Ghost and by fire was an inward purging of the heart and putting off of the old nature, and this was

performed by Christ in the New Covenant. The early Quakers' rejection of outward celebrations of the Lord's supper posed even greater problems, as the Scriptures testified that it was instituted by Christ himself. Their argument generally rested on their understanding of what was meant by the words "shew the Lord's death till he come" [1 Cor 11:26b]. The Lord had already come again -- by his Spirit at Pentecost, and again, after the long night of the apostasy, in the Quaker movement. The true supper was to be known when the believer heard Christ knocking at the door of the heart and opened the door and supped with him [Rev 3:20]. Both baptism and the Lord's supper were figures to be fulfilled by Christ in the heart. "Boast not yourselves in your ordinances," warned one Quaker, "as water, bread and wine, which is but elementary, and was never but a sign; and in the day of appearance of Christ, the elements shall melt with fervent heat."[76] If this did not satisfy their opponents, the early Quakers simply flung out the following challenge: "what scripture had Paul to cry down circumcision when he saw it abused?"[77]

What the early Quakers believed, then, was that the whole of the Old Covenant was fulfilled in the New, and that Christ ministered the whole of the New Covenant immediately in the hearts of his people. He was their Sabbath rest, their true Passover meal, their Priest, Prophet, teacher, leader, husband and light. Since Christ was all these things -- and many more besides -- there is a tendency amongst the early Quakers to use these titles in a loose way, often stringing several together in an attempt to express the overwhelming nature of their experience of his presence. Much has been written in recent years about the importance of Christ as prophet in early Quaker thought,[78] and while

this has been extremely valuable in presenting a challenge to the traditional interpretation of the Quakerism (i.e., as a religion of mystical universal inner light not related in any clear way to the figure of Jesus of Nazereth), it has obscured the degree to which Christ was "all" in the minds of the first Friends. He was the fulfilment not only of the prophets, but also of the entire Old Covenant. The following quotation from Lewis Benson serves as an example of this type of interpretation:

> Fox's christology focuses on the prophetic office of Christ. Conventional christology has focused on the Atonement, interpreted in various ways, accomplished by Jesus' death; and on the Incarnation, that is, the embodiment of the divine word in human flesh. Fox's christology puts the emphasis on Christ as the fulfilment of the prophecy that a prophet like Moses would come, who is to be heard and obeyed in all things. From Fox's viewpoint, a messiah who is not the universal prophet who knows and teaches the principles of God's righteousness to all men is not the saviour of the world. Through his office as heavenly prophet, Jesus Christ overcomes and vanquishes the darkness, death and captivity that came upon man through disobedience, and a new era of light, life and obedience is born.[79]

This quite rightly puts an emphasis on the immediate work of Christ in the present, teaching "the principles of God's righteousness to all". The problem with this understanding of Fox's message is its tendency to produce a narrow description of Christ's work which may be detected elsewhere in Benson's writings. At times the overwhelming importance Benson attaches to Christ's prophetic teaching results in a reduction of salvation to the "re-establishing of the link of communication between man and his creator". Thus Christ's work is described as "the way that God has chosen to restore the line of communication between man and himself".[80] Do Fox's writings present a clear "christology focusing on the prophetic office of Christ", or is his distinctive message instead an emphasis on the *present* work of Christ in the heart in all his

offices? There was, I believe, a tendency amongst the first Quakers to use these titles (prophet, leader, priest, captain, husband) as interchangeable metaphors for the *one* work of Christ within. For example, in the Old Covenant, wrote George Fox, "people was to hear Moses and the High Priest... but now they are to hear Christ, their High Priest and Prophet".[60] The Quakers' understanding of Christ's work as a "prophet like Moses" (Deut. 18 v 18) may have been influenced by the very great significance of Moses in the Old Covenant. Moses was associated not only with the prophets, being the archetypal "servant of God" to whom later prophets looked; but also with the Law, and the exodus. What Moses was to the Old Covenant, Christ was to the New. He was the prophet and teacher of his people, but also their High Priest who offered himself as a sacrifice for sin, and the one who led his people out of the fall, and bondage in spiritual Egypt, up to God again.

Conclusion

For the early Quakers the work of Christ in the heart in the present was the focus of their religious thought and experience. Christ was come and coming again after the apostasy, and was being revealed in his light as judge, prophet and king. His work was to bring the soul up out of the fall and restore it to God again. This redeeming work in the believer indicated to the Quakers the imminent approach of a wider redemption throughout the whole creation. The first Quakers believed they were living in the end times, and that their position was unique and pivotal in the appearing kingdom. One writer saw the Quaker movement as:

> a people great and strong, there hath not been ever the like, neither shall there be any more after it, even to the years of many

> generations; a fire goeth before them, and behind them a flame that burneth; the land is as the garden of Eden before them, and behind them a desolate wilderness; and nothing shall escape them; the appearance of them is as the appearance of horses, and as horsemen,... the earth shall quake before them, the heavens shall tremble, the sun and moon shall be dark, and the stars shall withdraw their shining, and the Lord shall utter his voice before his army (as he now doth) for his camp is very great, for he is strong that executeth his word; for the day of the Lord is great and very terrible, and who can abide it?[61]

Once this aspect of early Quakerism is understood, other Quaker beliefs fall into place. If, on the other hand, the work of Christ is not seen in this context, then the early Quaker statements on the atonement and nature of Christ seem idiosyncratic or even heretical. To their contemporaries who did not accept the Quakers' eschatology, their beliefs seemed highly dangerous. They appeared to deny the doctrine of the Trinity;[62] they attacked certain aspects of the Calvinist system of belief, in particular the idea of satisfaction and imputed righteousness;[63] and conflated the carefully distinguished stages of justification and sanctification by their stubborn claims to personal perfection.[64] Above all, their talk of a light within sufficient to lead people to salvation was to their enemies' mind a clear undermining the work of Christ on the cross. Those around them rejected the Quakers' assertions that the Christ they witnessed within them was "no other Christ but that who witnessed a good confession before Pontius Pilate,"[65] although the Quakers were sincere in this stance. For them the whole of the Scriptures bore testimony to the fact that the Jesus they read about was the Christ whose Spirit they experienced in their midst. The relationship between the Spirit and the Scriptures could not have been closer in the minds of the first Quakers, (see Chap. 2).

Their opponents were unable to understand or accept the Quakers'

conviction that they were witnessing the eschatological presence of Christ amongst them. The fears of those outside the movement as to the tendency of Quaker thought may be illuminated by an exploration of what happened to the Quakers' understanding of Christ once their early vision had faded. This will be examined in Chap. 3 below; but briefly, their changed outlook left later Quakers with increasing difficulty in assigning a unique place to Jesus in salvation, and with a growing uncertainty over the place of the Bible in their system of belief. Subsequent generations were not able to assert with the same confidence that:

> this is my beloved, O ye daughters of Jerusalem; and this is my friend and redeemer, O ye sons of men, even he who hath redeemed my soul from hell, and brought me back from the power of the grave; this is the prophet of whom Moses did write should come, and is come, and there is not another then he that is risen up in the midst, which is the light of the world in the heart... and though I speak of the operation of Christ in his members, yet I do not deny the works which were wrought by him in his own person; and though I preach Christ within the hope of glory, yet I do not preach another.[86]

Endnotes

[1]See Fox's letter to the Governor of Barbados (1671), quoted in his *Journal*, 602-606. This is comparatively late, and reflects the Quakers' growing need to demonstrate their orthodoxy in the face of severe persecution. However, nothing expressed here is alien to early Quaker beliefs, and the following extract is something of an embarrassment to those wishing to portray Quakerism as a creedless faith:

> God who is the only wise, omnipotent, and everlasting God we do own and believe in, who is the creator of all things in heaven and in earth,...
>
> And that Jesus Christ is his only begotten Son in whom he is well pleased, who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, and born of the Virgin Mary, in whom we have redemption, through his blood even the forgiveness of sins, who is the express image of the invisible God, the first-born of every creature, by whom all things were created that are in heaven and that are in the earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones or dominions or principalities or powers; all things were created by him,
>
> And we do own and believe that he was made sin for us, who knew no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth, and he was crucified for us in the flesh without the gates of Jerusalem; and that he was buried and rose again the third day by his own power for our justification, and we do believe that he ascended up into heaven, and now sitteth at the right hand of God,.. (602-3)

The statement that Christ rose "by his own power" is probably a reference to John 10:18.

[2]Francis Howgill, *The Measuring Rod of the Lord*, (London: Giles Calvert, 1658), 7.

[3]Nayler and Fox, *Saul's Errand to Damascus*, quoted in Barbour and Roberts, eds., *Early Quaker Writers*, 261.

[4]Fox, *A Testimony of What we Believe of Christ*, (1675), *Gospel Truth Demonstrated*, 415-468, 423, 425. Many other writers were becoming cautious about perfection in the '70s, but Fox's belief in it never wavered.

[5]William Smith, *The New Creation Brought Forth in the Holy Order of Life*, (London: Robert Wilson, 1661), 7; William Bayly, *Iacob is become a Flame and the House of Esau Stubble*, (no printers name, place or date), 1. See also Burrough's account of creation in *A Discovery of Divine Mysteries wherein is unfolded Secret Things of the Kingdom of God*, (1661), *Memorable Works*, 821-838, 823-4.

[6]Although contrasting themes of "inner" and "outer" run through Quaker writings, a flesh/spirit dualism was not really a part of their thought. Flesh was not sinful in itself, since they believed that it was created by God, and that Christ came in the flesh: "he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham" [Heb. 2:16, King James Version.] This was blurred by their use of the word "flesh" to mean corrupt and fallen human nature, following the New Testament usage. The word "human" was interestingly treated in the same way, which led to their rejection of the idea that Jesus had a human soul. See Fox, *Testimony of What We Believe*, 434. This does not mean that the Quakers were Docetists, rather that they wished to emphasise the sinlessness of Christ. There is, however, a tendency on the part of some Quakers to suggest that the body of Jesus was merely inhabited by

the Divine, see Bayly, *A Short Discovery of the State of Man before the Fall, in the Fall and out of the Fall again*, (London: no printer's name, 1659), 4:

> the power which was in that man (or body) which suffered without the gate of Jerusalem, was before the body, or creature was made, and it was the power of the Most High which overshadowed the Virgin, and said he, a body hast thou prepared for me (mark) this was the power and life in the body which spoke,

For a further development of this idea see Edward Grubb on Isaac Penington's writings, *The Historic and the Inward Christ: A Study in Quaker Thought*, Swarthmore Lecture, 1914, (London: Headly Bros., 1914), 34-36. However, as another writer points out, despite "much loose language... from which heterodox views of the human-divine nature of Christ might be inferred", the Quakers were essentially orthodox in the understanding of Christ. (Arthur, O. Roberts, "Early Friends and the Work of Christ", *Quaker Religious Thought*, 3 (Spring 1961), 12-13. An entirely different view is taken by Endy here, *William Penn and Early Quakerism*, 184-5, 274-5, 277-87.

[7]Bayly, *Iacob*, 2.

[8]Charles Marshall, *The Way of Life Revealed and the Way of Death Discovered*, (no printer's name or place, 1674), 5.

[9]Nayler, *Love to the Lost*, 1.

[10]Burrough, *A Description of the State and Condition of all Mankind*, (1656), *Memorable Works*, 115-123, 116.

[11]Other scholars feel that the image of God was the "hearing and obeying relationship... from which man and woman fell." Lisa B. Kuenning, "Christ's Wife: A Vision for all Women", in *Quaker Religious Thought*, 18 (Summer 1979) 2-36, 13. See also Lewis Benson, "The Early Quaker Vision of the Church", *Quaker Religious Thought*, 2 (Spring 1960) 2-35, 4, where he says "the image of God is not to be understood as something that man possesses as part of his humanity with which he is endowed at creation, but it expresses, rather, a state of relationship between God and man... [it is] the dialogic relationship in which man stands to God." This position cannot be supported from early Quaker texts, in my view. See also Wilmer A. Cooper, "Quaker Perspectives on the Nature of Man", *Quaker Religious Thought*, 2 (Autumn 1960) 2-36, 4.

[12]Humphrey Smith, *A True and Everlasting Rule from God Discovered*, (London: Thomas Simmons, 1658), 1. William Bayly takes exception to the use of the word "earthly" in connection with "the first state of man, seeing he was made in the image of God, in his likeness, without sin, upright, and was blessed of God..." (*Discovery of the State of Man*, 2). Through disobedience the first Adam "became earthly". This is not a significant difference, however, as it arises from the Quaker habit of identifying "earthly" with "fallen", (see n6 above on their similar use of "flesh" and "human").

[13]Marshall, *Way of Life*, 4; George Bishop, *A Tender Visitation of Love to both the Universities, Oxford and Cambridge*, (London: Robert Wilson, 1660), 3; Richard Hodden, *The One Good Way of God*, (London: J.

C., 1661), 14; Burrough, *A Description of the State... of Mankind*, 116. Fox appears also to have favoured the idea that God breathed the soul into the body, although he may have had a concept of a spirit (human) as well. See T. Canby Jones, "George Fox's Teaching on Salvation and Atonement", (Ph. D. dissertation, Yale, 1955), 79-82.

[14]Smith, *New Creation*, 7, 8; Samuel Fisher, *Apokrypta Apokalypta*, quoted in Barbour and Roberts, eds., *Early Quaker Writers*, 304-314, 309-310.

[15]Eg., Marshall, "[man was] drove into the earth", *Way of Life*, 6; Thomas Kent, *The Fall of Man Declared*, (London: Thomas Simmons, 1661), 9; Bayly, *Discovery of the State of Man*, 2; Humphrey Smith, "into that which is earthly", *True and Everlasting Rule*, 1. This kind of language may have come from the idea of Adam and Eve being driven out of Eden, Gen 3:23,24.

[16]Burrough, *State of Mankind*, 116; Samuel Watson, *A Testimony of God's Power*, (no printer's name or place, 1672), 5; Nayler, *Love to the Lost*, 1.

[17]Burrough, *Discovery of Divine Mysteries*, 824. Burrough is somewhat unusual here, as the early Quakers were not particularly concerned with speculation about the origins of evil and of Satan's fall. They usually quoted John 8:44, "the Devil abode not in the truth", which amounted to a declaration that God was not the source of evil, thereby distinguishing themselves from the Ranter position, (see A. L. Morton, *The World of the Ranters: Religious Radicalism in the English Revolution*, (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1970), 76, 77). At least one other early Quaker writer was interested in this question, however, and explored it in some detail:

> When the pure creation was finished,.. it rested in the holy order of life, and was in the pure harmony and oneness with the Creator,..
>
> There was a part that did not keep its station, but moved out of the wisdom, and brake the order, and did aspire towards the equality of the Holy Essence, for which cause it was cast down by the power, and driven into the lowest parts of the creation, and was there to have its place and habitation at the furthest distance from God; and his anger kindled against it, and he drove it down in his anger, and his wrath abides upon it, and it is sealed down in his anger and wrath without recovery,.. [It] aspired to have been equal with the power, and his name is Serpent, the Devil, and his place is hell, the bottomless pit,.. When this aspiring part was cast down into the lowest part; it became beastly, earthly and devilish.

Smith, *New Creation*, 9, 10.

[18]Bayly, *Iacob*, 2; Nayler, *Love to the Lost*, 1.

[19]S. R., ["a hand-maid of the Lord"] *A Tender Visitation of Love to Professors and Profane*, (London: Thomas Simmons, 1661), 11.

[20]George Rofe, *The Righteousness of God to Man wherein he was Created*, (London: Giles Calvert, 1656) 1; Bayly, *Iacob*, 3.

[21]Burrough, *State of Mankind*, 116. See also R. Ashby, *A Salutation of Love*, (London: T. Sowle, 1699), "therefore it is very apparent, that man's misery is of himself", 2.

[22]Nayler, *Love to the Lost*, 1.

[23]See, for instance, Braithwaite, who remarks in *Beginnings of Quakerism*, 36-7, that Fox's

> great affirmation, that every man had received from the Lord a measure of light which, if followed, would lead him to the Light of Life, was in conflict with the current Puritan conceptions of the nature of God and of human nature. One-sided doctrines of election and reprobation had obscured the Fatherhood of God and had magnified His sovereignty at the cost of veiling His love. And, on the other hand, the line was drawn sharply between the human and the Divine. The natural man belonged to an undivine order of life, marred by the Fall, and under the dominion of Satan. In agreement with this "dualistic" conception of the universe, the Calvinistic sects of the day held that during life there was no escape from the body of sin. These ideas of the age were part of Fox's mental environment, and had their influence,... on Quaker thought and practice; it speaks strongly for his singleness of purpose that they should not assert their authority against the living witness of the Light within.

A similar line of thought is taken Gadt, "Women and Protestant Culture", 19:

> Whereas Puritans were distrustful of their own desires and instituted inner and outer watchfulness, Quakers welcomed the mystery of the "inner light". This light was the Spirit of God waiting within the individual in the form of a divine seed, to sprout forth and guide that person's daily thoughts and activities. To be sure, the Quakers did not equate the light or the Spirit with the human will, but they were a step closer than the Puritans. This direct revelation of God evinced a trust of the self conspicuously absent in Puritanism... In trusting an inner voice, Quakers changed the concept of God from the power of tyranny to the power of love.

Although the Quakers disagreed with their Puritan contemporaries over many issues, they were certainly not divided over the fact that "the natural man belonged to an undivine order of life, marred by the Fall, and under the dominion of Satan." The Quakers believed this so strongly that they were extremely reluctant to admit that Christ had a "human" soul; even though this exposed them to the charge of Docetism. Nor did they manifest any "trust of the self" by heeding an inner voice. The voice of Christ was wholly other than the fallen human self; and in any case, Gadt has slender grounds for assuming either that the Puritans never trusted inner voices, or that the inner voice heard by the Quakers was not at times "tyrannical" rather than loving. See also Rachel Hadley King, *George Fox and the Light Within 1650-1660*, (Philadelphia: Friends' Book Store, 1940), 39; and Howard Brinton's *Friends for Three Hundred Years*, (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1953), 50, where he states that for the early Quakers "the Fall was not as complete as it was for the Calvinists." He says elsewhere that "the divine is... a part of human personality", 53. This cannot be found in early Quaker thought, in my view.

[24]S. R., *Visitation*, 11.

[25]Kent, *Fall of Man*, 8, 9.

[26]Bayly, *Discovery of the State of Man*, 1.

[27]Burrough, *State of Mankind*, 116; Kent, *Fall of Man*, 9; Smith, *New Creation*, 13.

[28]Nayler, *Love to the Lost*, 1.

[29]Hodden, *One Good Way*, 15.

[30]Smith, *New Creation*, 11.

[31]Marshall, *Way of Life*, 6; Bayly, *Discovery of the State of Man*, 2.

[32]Rofe, *Righteousness of God*, 5.

[33]Gustav Aulen, *Christus Victor: an Historical Study of the Three Main Types of Atonement*, translated by A. G. Herbert, (London: S.P.C.K., 1931). William Penn provides a good example of this model of atonement in *Primitive Christianity Revived in the Faith and Practice of the People Called Quakers*, (1696):

> We say that He then overcame our common enemy, foiled him in the open field, and in our nature triumphed over him that had overcome and triumphed over it in our forefather Adam and his posterity.

In *The Peace of Europe: The Fruits of Solitude and Other Writings by William Penn*, Everyman Series, (London: J. M. Dent and Sons, n. d.) 231-276, 263. See also Fell's *Call to the Universal Seed of God*, (1665), in *Remarkable Passages* 304-324, "and so in this seed Christ Jesus, is the serpent's power broken down, and all the promises are in him... that which was broken down is builded up again, and renewed up into a better state than Adam was in before he fell, into an estate that will stand and endure for ever", 308-9.

[34]Nayler, *Love to the Lost*, 1.

[35]Fox, *Journal*, 27.

[36]Nayler, *Love to the Lost*, 1; Fox, *Journal*, 110. For a further discussion of this idea see Geoffrey Nuttall, "Unity with the Creation: George Fox and the Hermetic Tradition", in *The Puritan Spirit: Essays and Addresses*, 194-203, (London: Epworth Press, 1967).

[37]Fox, *Journal*, 137.

[38]Parnell, quoted in L. Hugh Doncaster, "Early Quaker Thought on 'That State in which Adam was before he Fell'", *Journal of Friends Historical Society*, XLI, (1949), 13-24, 18. Parnell was clearly trying to force his opponents into admitting to belief in some kind of purgatory, a trick which Fox also employed on occasions, eg. *The Spiritual Man Christ Jesus*, (1677), *Gospel Truth Demonstrated*, 561-565, 564-5. For a similar attack, see Whitehead, *Divinity of Christ*, "when and where is the time and place of being fully cleansed after death, is it in the grave, or is it in some purgatory?" 4.

[39]Fox, *Journal*, 667.

[40]Ibid., 27.

[41]Fox, *Birth that must be Silent*, 96.

[42]See Jones, *Spiritual Reformers*, for instance.

[43]The assertion that the light enlightened everyone was typical of the early Quakers, and was prompted by their fierce opposition to the Calvinist doctrine of predestination held by their Puritan contemporaries. The enemies of Quakerism reduced the Quaker position to mere Deism. This was not at all what the earliest Quaker preachers intended, although Brinton thinks that "Penn, like other early Quakers was a Deist." *Religious Philosophy of Quakerism*, 11.

[44]Frances Howgill, *A Lamentation for the Scattered Tribes*, (London: Giles Calvert, 1656), 6. For a similar use of the imagery of Jesus' parables, see Fox, *The Pearl Found in England*, (1658), in *Gospel Truth Demonstrated*, 131-141, 131.

[45]Maurice A. Creasey gives a clear analysis of the confusion and outrage occasioned by the early Quakers' language about the light:

> For early Friends all they said about the Light they intended to be understood as being said about Christ;... when they spoke of Christ they meant a Christ whose activity in relation to the world of men comprehended all that which in the New Testament and in the mainstream of Christian doctrine was normally distributed among the logos or Word or Son, the historic Jesus Christ, the risen and glorified Christ, and the Holy Spirit.
>
> ...It is also very clear from the controversial writings of the early Friends that this flexible and comprehensive usage was a source of endless confusion and recrimination. To most of their contemporaries, early Friends appeared to be doing two things. On the one hand, they seemed to be claiming for "the Light" a sovereign significance which, to those for whom "the Light" meant only the light of reason or of conscience, was clearly preposterous. On the other hand, they seemed to be emptying the word "Christ" of its primary historic reference, employing it to confuse all the precisely defined theological categories and to undermine the orthodox scheme of salvation.

"The Quaker Interpretation of the Significance of Christ", *Quaker Religious Thought* 1 (Autumn 1959), 2-32, 5.

[46]John Bunyan, *A Vindication of Gospel Truths Opened According to the Scriptures*, (1657), in George Offor, ed., *The Works of John Bunyan*, 3 vols. (London: Blackie and Sons, 1875; reprint ed., Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1977), 177-214, 184. The main source of disagreement between Burrough an Bunyan appears to have been a clash between subjective and objective models of atonement. Bunyan maintained that when Christ called himself the light of the world "he did not mean at that time any light within, but himself who was without. And indeed, they who would follow Christ aright, must follow him without, to the cross without, for justification on Mount Calvary without, (that is, they must seek for justification by his obedience without), to the grave without, and to his ascension and intercession in heaven without; and this must be done through the operation of his own Holy Spirit, that he hath promised shall show these things unto them, being given within them for that purpose." Ibid.. Here we see Bunyan firmly putting beliefs back into the categories that Burrough had confused and blurred. This entire tract is a fine example of a contemporary's misunderstanding of the Quaker message, with Bunyan trying to pin Burrough down with precise doctrinal questions, and Burrough brushing these impatiently to one side. On the subject of Christ within, Bunyan attempts to extract from Burrough the admission that the Quaker position logically implied that "that very man with that very body" was within them. Burrough responds by saying that "the very Christ of God is within us, we dare not deny

him; and we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones as the Ephesians were: They that are led with a spirit of delusion, shall answer the rest of this thy query." 193. Bunyan was by no means satisfied with this answer.

[47]Bayly, *A Warning from the Spirit of Truth unto all Persecutors*, (London: no printer's name, 1658), 25. The strength of language here indicates how important the idea of perfection was for the early Friends. It was absolutely central to their understanding of the work of Christ, and their self-image as the true restored church in the time of eschatological fulfilment of the scriptural promises.

[48]Burrough, *Trumpet*, 19.

[49]Fell, "Epistle to Friends", (1653), in *Remarkable Passages*, 47-51, 48.

[50]Burrough, *A Declaration to all the World of our Faith*, (1657), in *Memorable Works*, 439-443, 442-3.

[51]See William Smith's warning in *The Everlasting Truth Exalted*, (no printer's name or place, 1669), "[it is] most worthy of all things to be loved and obeyed in the least appearance of it; for who despises the day of small things cannot come to the day of glory", 4.

[52]Fell, "Epistle to Friends"; Fox, *To all that would know the Way to the Kingdom*, (1653), in *Gospel Truth Demonstrated*, 1-9, 3.

[53]Fox, ibid..

[54]Hubberthorne, *The Light of Christ Within proved to be Sufficient to lead unto God*, in *Books and Writings*, 1-22 [incorrect page numbering], 41; Burrough, *A Trumpet*, 5.

[55]Fox, *Pearl*, 137.

[56]Fell, *Call*, 309.

[57]Nayler, *Love to the Lost*, 2.

[58]This idea was often expressed in terms of resurrection, and undoubtedly gave rise to the suspicion that the Quakers denied an outward historical resurrection of Christ, or a general resurrection on the last day. The issue is further complicated by the use of the word "seed" in this connection, which can usually be taken to mean Christ in early Quaker thought; but here must mean something else. The following extract from Nayler's *Love to the Lost* illustrates this usage:

> as the mind is staid in the light from hearkening to the earthly; so that seed which lies in death, comes to hear the voice of the Son of God, and to receive life and strength from the word, whereby it is raised out of the grave, and appears above the earth, to receive from the father the dew of heaven whereby it is nourished and refreshed,.. And as man beholds the seed growing, so he comes to see the new creation, and what he had lost in the fall, and so is restored by the power of the word,

2. For the early Quaker use of the word "seed" see T. Joseph Pickvance,

"George Fox's Use of the Word 'Seed'", *Journal of Friends' Historical Society*, XLI, (1949), 25-28.

[59]Howgill, *A Lamentation*, 6. See also James Parnell's *A Trial of Faith wherein is discovered the Ground of the Faith of the Hypocrite*, (London: no printer's name, 1655), where he says:

> if thou beest diligent keeping thy mind within, with an ear open to the pure voice, thou shalt find it present within thee wheresoever thou art, in the fields, in thy bed, in markets, in company, or wheresoever thou art, when thy outward priest or teacher is absent, it may be in the ale-house, or at his pleasures and delights, or far off, it will be present with thee, and check thee,

4.

[60]William Dewsbury, *The Discovery of the Great Enmity of the Serpent against the Seed of the Woman*, (London: Giles Calvert, 1655), 19.

[61]Smith, *New Creation*, 29.

[62]Francis Howgill, *Lamentation*, 17; Burrough, *A Declaration of our Faith*, 3.

[63]See Fox: "now all the imperfection is out of Christ Jesus, in the devil, and Adam in the fall; and the perfection is in Christ Jesus that never fell." In *The People of God in Scorn Called Quakers their Love to all Mankind Asserted*, (1676), in *Gospel Truth Demonstrated*, 521-530, 524. King states that Fox "allowed for a gradual perfecting of men as did Puritanism. The difference is in Fox's greater optimism as to the quickness with which men can be perfected... He seems to have believed that the regenerate man grew gradually within the human being and that it is only the regenerate man that is sinless". In *Light Within*, 74. This fails to take into account the radical nature of the translation from the state of the fall into Christ. It also implies too great an area of agreement between the Quakers and their Puritan adversaries. The difference between the two groups rested upon the Quakers' belief that perfection was possible *in this life*.

[64]Barclay, *Apology*, 161.

[65]Burrough, *Some of the Principles of the Quakers, Scornfully so called by Men, Vindicated*, (no printer's name or place, 1658), 12; Nayler, *Salutation*, 23.

[66]Burrough, *A Just and Righteous Plea presented unto the King of England*, (1661), in *Memorable Works*, 769-792, 779; *A Faithful Testimony Concerning the True Worship of God*, in *Memorable Works*, 474-482, 479. The importance of this aspect of Christ's work in early Quaker thought is sometimes underestimated. Endy, for instance, observes that "Jesus of Nazareth did not seem especially important to them, but when pressed some Friends would speak of the historical Christ as the one who fulfilled the law, the types, the shadows and sacrifices." *William Penn and Early Quakerism*, 293. The significance of the Quakers' understanding of Christ as the fulfilment of the Old Covenant cannot be reduced to an attempt to allot some soteriological function to Jesus of Nazareth.

[67]Superimposed onto both of these was their understanding of the apostasy, in which they held that the truth of the restoration and the message of the New Dispensation had been lost since the Apostles' days, and only revealed again in the Quaker movement.

[68]Hebrews 10:1, 8:5-7. The significance of the Epistle to the Hebrews for George Fox is missed by Brinton, who sees it instead as the source of the unhealthy doctrines of the atonement he characterises as "Fundamentalist". *Religious Philosophy of Quakerism*, 18-19.

[69]See Besse, *Sufferings*, passim.

[70]Fox, *A Clear Distinction Between the Old Covenant, or Old Testament, and the New Covenant, or Testament*, (1680), in *Gospel Truth Demonstrated*, 746-776. Although this tract was written at the comparatively late date of 1680, it is a good example of position the earliest Quaker writers took on the relationship between the Old and New Covenants, and the role of Christ in fulfilling and abolishing the Old, and establishing the New. A great deal is lost by summarising the tract in this way, of course. Early Quaker arguments are rendered persuasive by the heaping up of examples, and in this case, the rhythmic repetition of the refrain "and so it's clear, that the New Covenant... is not according to the Old", which occurs throughout the tract, sometimes several times on one page. Fox does not divide his material into neat categories and deal with one after the other in order, but instead reverts to themes he has mentioned earlier and enlarges upon them. The theme of priesthood, for example, occurs on page 747, but reappears in several later places. Also absent from my summary are the mass of details which Fox packs into his argument.

[71]This is an attack in passing on the Calvinist doctrine of limited atonement. For the Quakers, one of the most significant differences between the Old Covenant and the New was a movement away from an idea of salvation linked with a particular racial group and a specific location (i.e. the temple in Jerusalem) towards Christ's offer of salvation for all. Possibly they felt that a doctrine that limited the effects of Christ's saving work to a small group smacked of the Old Dispensation. This is not to say that the North of England was not viewed as significant in salvation history, but it was important only as a starting point from which the message of Quakerism would spread throughout the whole world. See, for instance, Dewsbury's *The True Prophecy of the Mighty Day of the Lord*, (1655), quoted in Barbour and Roberts, eds., *Early Quaker Writers* 93-102, 93: "[the Day of the Lord] which is coming, and is appeared in the North of England, and is arising towards the south, and shall overspread this nation, and all the nations of the world". For other attacks on the doctrine of limited atonement, see Burrough, *Declaration of our Faith*, 1; George Keith, *The Universal Free Grace of the Gospel asserted*, (no printer's name or place, 1671), 89-90.

[72]Nayler, *Salutation*, 23.

[73]Fox, *Testimony of what we believe*, 465. One important idea is missing from this list: Christ as husband or bridegroom. This way of

viewing Christ had interesting implications for the role of women in the early Quaker movement, see below, Chap. 4.

[74]Fox, *Journal*, 35-39.

[75]Humphrey Smith, *True and Everlasting Rule*, 10; Nayler, *Salutation*, 7.

[76]Howgill, *Lamentation*, 5.

[77]Nayler, *Salutation*, 34. Nayler has this to say on the nature of outward ordinances:

> Without is no communion, whose knowledge is outward, and your worships outward, as in words, or water, bread or drink, or any carnal perishing things, though good in their time and place, to them who in their place could use them; yet were they not given as the substance but as the shadows, not in the place of God, but in the way of obedience to God, as many other carnal things, which in their place and time must not be omitted; as temple, circumcision, sacrifices, brazen-serpent, which were good, till set in the place of God, and till they who had them, set them up against truth and righteousness,.. Then the Lord departed out of them, and left them empty and desolate, and his next appearance cried them down without, and set up the substance of them within, so that God hath been forced all along to pull down what he himself did set up, though never so good, yet if carnal, the carnal mind would get into it, and adulterate from the maker, [Ibid., 33].

The key phrase here would seem to be "his next appearance cried them down without, *and set up the substance of them within*". This happened in a unique and final way with the setting up of the New Covenant by Christ; although it was lost during the apostasy, and only re-established with the birth of the Quaker movement.

[78]See in particular the writings of Lewis Benson.

[79]Benson, "'That of God in Every Man' -- What did George Fox mean by it?" in *Quaker Religious Thought*, 12 (Spring 1970), 4.

[80]Benson, "That of God in Every Man", 4. This is closely linked with Benson's understanding of the image of God as "the dialogic relationship in which man stands to God", ibid., which I do not consider to be an adequate description. See above, 31-34.

[81]Hubberthorne, *Rebukes of a Reviler fallen upon his own Head*, (1657), in *Books and Writings*, 86-202, 99.

[82]See, for instance, Penn's *Sandy Foundation Shaken*, (London: no printer's name, 1668), which asserts that "God is not a holy three, nor doth subsist in three distinct separate holy ones". Penn also dismisses "that frequent but impertinent distinction, that he is one in substance, but three in persons or subsistences", 12. Penn's main objection, shared by earlier writers, was to the idea that God might somehow be divided in himself. Another writer claimed when challenged on his beliefs about the Trinity that "the devil which did not abide in the truth, he is separated and distinguished from the Father eternally; but so is not the eternal Son of God, for he is in him,... for Christ saith, I and my Father are one; and he is not Christ without God," Hubberthorne, *Truth and Innocency*, 29.

[63]See Penn's *Sandy Foundation*, which contains a section titled "The Vulgar Doctrine of Satisfaction, being Dependent on the Second Person of the Imagin'd Trinity, refuted from Scripture", 16-20, and another titled "The Justification of Impure Persons, by an imputative Righteousness, refuted from Scripture," 24-29. See also Whitehead's *Divinity of Christ*, which deals with similar issues, (imputed righteousness, 63; satisfaction, 45); and John Vaughton's *The Devil the Greatest Sinner in the World*, (no printer's name or place, 1678), for similar points, e.g. "He that believeth is born of God, and he that is born of God is justified by Christ alone without imputation," 255.

[64]See Hubberthorne's *Truth and Innocency*, where an opponent is quoted as saying the Quakers "Hold equality with God, and the soul being one with God, and corrupt the doctrine of justification," 37. Burrough was accused of "confound[ing] justification and sanctification", which he denied, saying "they are one in Christ, for he is made unto us sanctification and justification, and the man that is in the pollutions of the world, unsanctified, is not justified." (In *Principles of the Quakers*, 12.) See also later discussions of these themes, e.g. John Crook and William Bayly, *Rebellion Rebuked*, (no printer's name or place, 1673), 18-19; and Francis Estlake, *A Bermudas Preacher Proved a Persecutor*, (London: John Bringhurst, 1683), "I confess that the whole work of a saviour, so far as was of him required, to be performed in and by that body, was perfectly performed, and nothing wanting as pertaining to our salvation. But is this the whole office of a saviour? Is there nothing farther to be done? Is the believing of this sufficient, without sanctification?" 53.

[65]Nayler, in Fox and Nayler, *Saul's Errand to Damascus*, 261. See also Audland, *The Innocent Delivered out of the Snare*, (London: Giles Calvert, 1655), "I declare that we own no other Christ, for salvation, or sanctification, wisdom, and righteousness, but that Christ which at Jerusalem was crucified and put to death," 2.

[66]Smith, *True and Everlasting Rule*, 35, 37.

CHAPTER 2

THE EARLY QUAKERS AND THE BIBLE

Introduction

At the heart of early Quaker theology lay the experience of Christ revealed and working within his people. So compelling was this experience that it led the first Quakers to believe that it heralded the end of the age. This chapter explores the effects of this conviction on their attitude to, and use of, the Scriptures.

For the early Quakers, Christ was all, and their desire to honour him and give him his proper place led them to make a distinction between Christ *the Word* of God, and the Scriptures as a *declaration* of that Word. They possessed a highly Christocentric understanding of the Scriptures, in which almost any passage of the Bible could be interpreted as speaking of Christ and his work. This might be prophetically, typologically, or in some vaguer "spiritual" sense. It was the dynamic activity of Christ the Word, not a mere "outward" knowledge of the "bare letter" of Scripture that could save. Christ was the "power"; and the letter, if put in Christ's place, became but another "form". The believer had to encounter Christ the "Substance" of the Scriptures, and since Christ was the substance of the Scriptures, wherever he revealed himself, the Scriptures themselves were revealed. It was common for the early Quakers to speak of the Scriptures being revealed or "opened" within them, and some described their conversion experience in terms of an enactment in their hearts and lives of the history of salvation found recorded in the Old and New Testaments. Another implication of the idea of Christ as the substance of the Scriptures was the early Quaker belief that people could be saved by the

activity of Christ, without an outward knowledge of the Bible. True knowledge of Christ comprehended a knowledge of the message of the Scriptures.

The revelation of Christ in the heart, the early Quakers believed, was unmediated. "Brain study" and the preaching of prepared sermons by an hourglass were rejected in favour of extempore speaking as the preacher was prompted immediately by Christ. This brought about a distinctive style of preaching and writing in which loosely connected texts, perhaps containing a key word or phrase, were heaped up to prove a point. Context was often completely ignored. When God addressed the people of seventeenth-century England through the mouths of the first Quaker prophets, he did so in the language and style of the King James Version of the Bible, as text after text was brought to the mind of the speaker. In spite of this, there were naturally certain passages of the Bible that the Quakers found more useful than others. These include the Epistle to the Hebrews, the apocalyptic material of both Testaments, the Old Testament Prophets, the Epistle of James, Paul's Epistles, and the Johannine material (though the latter was relied on less heavily than is often thought). The choice of proof texts was usually dictated by the nature of the subject in hand. For instance, a prophetic denunciation of the rich and powerful would be full of quotations from the Old Testament Prophets (and the Epistle of James), whereas a description of Christ as the fulfilment of the Old Testament would make use of the Epistle to the Hebrews.

It is sometimes suggested that the early Quakers relied on the authority of the Spirit at the expense of the Scriptures. They themselves denied this, however, claiming instead to witness within

their hearts the same Spirit that gave forth the Scriptures. It is clear from their early writings that the Quakers felt they were living and breathing the same spiritual air as the prophets and apostles. This was probably not primarily a theological conviction so much as a belief born of experience: that was how it appeared to them. In particular, it led them to draw parallels between their situation and the that of first Christians. Just as Christ had appeared in the flesh sixteen hundred years before, in the same way he was now appearing in Spirit to his believers. The failure of those around them to recognise this Second Coming of Christ was seen by the early Quakers as analogous to the rejection and crucifixion of Jesus by the Jews. The Scriptures without the Spirit could not convince the unregenerate soul that Christ had come again; for the Jews had possessed the Scriptures and yet had crucified Christ. The early Quakers, then, were in bitter confrontation with those who relied on the Bible as their guide and touchstone.

The Word and the Letter

The Quakers, noted Richard Baxter in 1696, "will not have the Scripture called the word of God".[1] This was true from the earliest days of the movement, and they did not believe they were robbing the Scriptures of their "due esteem", by insisting on this, as Baxter suspected. Rather they wished to establish Christ in his rightful place as the true Word of God:

> The Scripture we own to be the *words* of God, which are a declaration of the *Word* of God, which was from the beginning, before the Scriptures were written.[2]

This point is to be found expressed with varying degrees of vehemence in the controversial tracts of the early Quakers, and was to a large extent

a polemical stance. The aim of the first Quakers was to convince those outside the movement of the truth of their claim to be the true church restored by Christ after the long night of the apostasy. By the mid-Seventeenth Century the Scriptures had long been readily available in the vernacular, and it was clear to the Quakers that a knowledge of the Bible alone had not been sufficient to reform and purify the church. Something more was needed; and in their experience of Christ active by his Spirit in the heart, the early Quakers believed that they had found the answer. The New Testament itself suggested a distinction between "the oldness of the letter" and the "newness of the spirit" (Rom 7:6). The true ministers of Christ were "not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life" (2 Cor 3:6). The "people and teachers of this world" were attacked by one Quaker in the following words:

> [You] are doting on the Scripture without, with your dark minds there, with the blind pharisees seeking for life where it is not to be found, but will not come to Christ the light, that you may have life; but would cast him out of his throne, and exalt the Scriptures above him, calling them the judge, and the light, and the word, and the life, and the rule, and the guide; and thus with your dark minds you would take the authority from Christ and would give it to the dead letter, which is but a declaration of these things.[3]

The same point was made even more forcefully by another writer in a work directed against John Owen:

> Is not the word of God not only the proper name John 1, Rev. 19, but also the proper nature and divine being of Christ, which he had before he was made flesh, from the very beginning before the Scripture was that declares of him... And because we will not take this glorious title of his... and invest such a corruptible thing herewith as the mouldering letter, a writing with men's hands which worms may eat... dost thou say we divest him of his divine being? Dost thou not beget this bastardly business of divesting Christ himself of his divine name and nature, excellency and existence in thy own brain, by ascribing these to the Scriptures... and then lay it at the door of the Quakers?[4]

This distinction between Word and letter was not simply a piece of Quaker pedantry, but an issue for which they considered it worth risking personal liberty. George Fox provides a vivid account of how he felt compelled to interrupt a sermon that he considered was exalting the Scriptures too highly:

> I went away to the steeplehouse. And when I came there, all the people looked like fallow ground, and the priest, like a great lump of earth, stood in his pulpit above. He took for his text these words of Peter, 'We have also a more sure word of prophecy, whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day-star arise in your hearts.' And he told the people that the Scriptures were the touchstone and judge by which they were to try all doctrines, religions and opinions, and to end controversy. Now the Lord's power was so mighty upon me, and so strong in me, that I could not hold, but was made to cry out and say, 'Oh, no, it is not the Scriptures'... But I told them what it was, namely the Holy Spirit, by which the holy men of God gave forth the Scriptures, whereby opinions, religions and judgments were to be tried.[5]

Fox was arrested as he spoke and put in prison, 'a pitiful stinking place', where he remained for some time.

This distinction, about which the first Quakers felt so strongly, between Christ the Word and the Scriptures as the declaration of the Word, had several implications. It was not, as Richard Baxter suspected, the beginning of the slippery slope to antinomianism. The Quakers quite consciously distinguished themselves from the Ranters who at their most extreme rejected the Scriptures as "a bundle of contradictions", and whose allegedly drunken and promiscuous behaviour brought about a swift suppression of the movement.[6] The distinction between Quaker and Ranter was not perceived as clearly by their opponents, however; and there were good reasons for this. The aggressive style of the Quaker evangelists, their denunciation of the rich and powerful, their dramatic prophetic signs (particularly that of

appearing naked in public) and their apparent lack of respect for Scripture made it difficult for those outside the movement to distinguish between the two groups, even had they wished to do so. John Bunyan defended his practice of putting the Quakers in the same category as the Ranters by asking "what harm is it to join a dog and a wolf together? A fawning dog and a wolf in sheep's clothing; they differ a little in outward appearance, but they can both agree to worry Christ's lambs." Bunyan also claimed that one Quaker had advised him to "throw away the Scriptures".[7] If this last claim is true, (and there seems to be no strong reason to doubt it), then it seems likely that the speaker intended to imply that Bunyan's attitude to the Bible was idolatrous, rather than that the Scriptures were worthless. The incident would have done little to persuade Bunyan that the Quakers were more godly than the Ranters, however. All Bunyan would admit was that the Quakers had set "a new gloss upon [the Ranters' beliefs] again, by an outward legal holiness, or righteousness."[8]

Notwithstanding some extreme language on the subject of scriptural authority, in practice the early Quakers manifested a deep respect for the Bible. The close connection between Christ the Word and the written declaration is well illustrated in the following exchange between a Quaker (Richard Hubberthorne), Charles II, and a Lord, in 1660:

> King How know you that you are inspired by the Lord?
> R. H. According as we read in the Scriptures, that the inspiration of the Almighty giveth understanding, so by its inspiration is an understanding given us of the things of God.
> a Lord How do you know that you are led by the true Spirit?
> R. H. This we know, because the Spirit of truth it reproves the world of sin, and by it we were reproved of sin; and also are led from sin unto righteousness and obedience of truth, by which effects we know it is the true Spirit, for the spirit of the wicked one doth

not lead unto such things.[9]

Hubberthorne's conviction that he and his fellow Quakers were inspired and led by God was based on Scriptural evidence (Job 32:8b, John 16:8). As Hubberthorne claimed elsewhere, "[the work of the light] leads up in the fulfilling of Scripture, not in the opposition to it."[10] Christ, by his light, could reveal things independently of Scripture, but not contrary to what the Quakers perceived to be its main message.[11] With the savage suppression of the Ranters, and some Ranter-like excesses within the Quaker movement itself, came a strong need to reaffirm the basic respect of the Quakers for the Scriptures. By the time George Fox was writing his Journal in the mid 1670's this concern was made all the more pressing by the systematic and brutal persecution of the Quakers, and the following assurance appeared in his account of his early revelations:

> These things I did not see by the help of man, nor by the letter, though they are written in the letter, but I saw them in the light of the Lord Jesus Christ, and by his immediate Spirit and power, as did the holy men of God, by whom the Holy Scriptures were written. Yet I had no slight esteem of the Holy Scriptures, but they were very precious to me, for I was in that spirit by which they were given forth, and what the Lord opened in me I afterwards found was agreeable to them.[12]

What we see in early Quaker thought, then, is a respect for the Bible not as the Word of God, but as a declaration of the Word, Christ. They displayed, in Fox's words, "no slight esteem" for the Scriptures. In debate they agreed to be bound by Scripture, they attacked the beliefs of their opponents on Scriptural grounds, and their tracts are full of allusions to, and direct quotations from, the Bible. Their understanding of their experience of Christ was invariably expressed in biblical phrases; and any belief or custom found in early Quakerism,

however odd, can almost invariably be traced back to a scriptural source. What we do not find in early Quaker thought is the concept of revelation unconnected to the message of Scripture. Even the moment-by-moment guidance which the Quakers felt they received immediately from God was based on their understanding of how the prophets and apostles were inspired; so that the *kind* of instructions they received were Scriptural, even if the details pertained to the Seventeenth Century. Throughout the early decades of the movement there persisted in the minds of the Quakers an intimate relationship between the words and the Word.

This may be seen clearly in a tract by George Fox. Even when those "that are unlearned outwardly" were taught by the light in "parables and figures" from nature around them in their daily lives,

these were all taken from the Scriptures:

> And as the light opens and exerciseth thy conscience, it will open to thee parables and figures... [it] will let thee see thy heart to be stony; and stones without thee of a like nature, and the highway ground without thee, so thy heart to be highway ground... as there are briars without thee, so there are briars within thee;... and as vipers without thee, so the nature of vipers within thee.

Fox asserts that "the Lord speak[eth] low things, comparisons like to that in man; that man may look upon creation with that which is invisible, and there read himself"; but an examination of the figures Fox provides shows that the Scriptures govern the content of these revelations. Those contemplating the creation in seventeenth-century England would be unlikely to encounter lions, wolves, earthquakes, wild grapes or dragons. The central point is that "the light of God gave forth all these figures".[13]

The burden of the first Quakers' complaint against their

opponents was that the Scriptures had become a "form" and that the "power" was being denied:

> The Scriptures are a mystery to the first nature in man, and he reads but doth not understand, for the life of them is hid from his carnal mind, so he argues from them carnally.
>
> It is not an outward belief, gathered from the letter, that will change the heart and life (though the judgment and opinion it may) so it is not a belief from the history, or the letter only, that can give man a saving knowledge of the death of Christ.[14]

Does your belief result in a changed heart and life? Is your knowledge saving knowledge? Do you have power to overcome sin? To the Quakers these were crucial questions. If these claims could not be made by those professing to be Christians, then their profession was empty. Profession without "possession" was a hallmark of apostasy. True knowledge of God could not be "gathered from the letter". It could only be known by revelation.

Revelation and Scripture

The idea of revelation was central in early Quaker thought. For them revelation was often dramatic, always direct and personal. It was an encounter with Christ that changed the lives of men and women -- if it was not resisted -- permeating every aspect of their thought and behaviour. This makes it a difficult subject to subdivide into neat categories, since the different aspects are interrelated. The following sections attempt to explore Quaker thought about revelation as it relates to the Scriptures from several different angles.

First and foremost, revelation was essential to a knowledge of God: "we do not believe that... the Gospel can be received by natural learning or education".[15] God could only be known through revelation,

since human wisdom, or the flesh, was fallen and could not understand the things of God. The experience of revelation for the early Quaker was not a comfortable one, for Christ revealed and judged sin in the heart:

> [God's] power was made manifest, and his word spoke within me, which word was in my heart, and was as a fire or a hammer; and this word being manifest within me, and my conscience being awakened by the light of God, which did convince me of sin... and the trumpet of the Lord was sounded within me, and the earth did tremble... My flesh wasted off my bones, and my bones smote one another, I knew the Lord to be terrible.[16]

Christ not only revealed sin, but also gave power to overcome it, and as sin and the devil were destroyed, so the believer was restored to God again. The work of Christ in undoing the effects of the fall and conquering the devil was the heart of the gospel for the early Quakers, and although an "outward" knowledge of the "history" could be gained from the Scriptures, saving knowledge lay in Christ's revelation in the heart.

The contrast between "power" and "form" that is so marked in early Quaker thought may be seen running through their understanding of the nature of God's revelation of himself throughout history. Closely linked with this is their understanding of the difference between "inner" and "outward", or spirit and flesh. The devil's work was to entice the mind out into outward forms, whereas Christ's work was to bring the mind and heart back to his revelation within so that God could be worshipped "in spirit and in truth". The battle between Christ and the devil was to be seen in the Old and New Testaments, but more importantly, it was to be experienced within the heart.

Law and Spirit

The Law and the Spirit were not set at opposite extremes to one another in early Quaker thought. The Law was given by God, and was therefore good. With the prophets, it had its part to play in the history of salvation, and this role was similar to that of John the Baptist: it was not the light, but came to bear witness to that light. The danger lay in mistaking the witness for the light itself and consequently not coming to Christ who was the substance of the Old Covenant.[17]

Why was the Law given? It was "added because of transgression", [Gal 3:19], for in Eden an outward law had been unnecessary:

> This was the word of faith in Adam's heart, whereby he knew what God required of him in his paradisal state, it was the word of his understanding and belief, and in this there was power to have preserved him, if he had trusted, and staid his mind in it, and in it he had known no evil.'[18]

Before the fall "the will of God and the will of man was one", and "God almighty was their teacher, their guider, and their orderer, who did teach them what to do, and what to leave undone." The teaching of God, or the "word of faith" in the heart was not lost in the fall, but because of disobedience its appearance changed from that of a teacher to that of a judge: "man transgressed the power that made him, and went forth from its counsel, and contrary to its will, and grieved it and vexed it, till it became his enemy to fight against him."[19] Although the human will was no longer one with the will of God, the witness of God remained, condemning sinful actions and thoughts.

From Adam to Moses "death reigned" (Rom 5:14), but with Moses came the Law, which "came upon the top of man, though it answered the witness of God in him, which he had transgressed."[20] Although the Law

was in harmony with the witness of God in the heart, it could not of itself give power to overcome sin. It performed a restraining role: "the Law made nothing perfect, not taking away the root of sin, but taking hold upon the actions". It had also a teaching role, where it worked with the inner witness of God to show that no human could ever fulfil the Law's demands:

> the Law that lays hold upon all transgressors we witness to endure spiritual, just and good; given forth against the first man, and his works good or bad (as people calls them) yea though he set himself to do the works of the Law never so zealously, yet a witness of condemnation the pure Law of God is against him in his conscience.
>
> And as your minds are kept to this Law that God hath written to show sin and evil, you will come to see the power that sin hath got over you.[21]

Once the realisation dawned that it was impossible to fulfil the Law, then the Law's function of pointing to Christ could be seen:

> You will come to see that this Law is pure and must be fulfilled every jot and tittle, else no passing, and when you see none can fulfil it in righteousness and purity, then way is made for Christ; and so the Law is the schoolmaster to lead to him where the righteousness is placed and power to fulfil it, who is the end of it for righteousness to everyone that believes.
>
> And this was Moses' ministration, for the Law came by him; howbeit this ministration was not the thing itself, neither could it make the comers thereunto perfect; yet in its time it was glorious, and was a true figure and shadow of him that was to come, which afterwards was to be more fully revealed, whose glory exceeded; and Moses' ministration was but a type of him, and a schoolmaster to bring unto him, who was before the world was; and it held forth, though more darkly, as in a glass, the glorious appearance of Christ the Word of God.[22]

Christ, as we have seen, (above, Chap. 1, 51-59) was the fulfilment and substance of the types and shadows of the Old Dispensation. As he was revealed and witnessed within, so the Scriptures were fulfilled in the heart. The mind was enabled to see beyond the outward forms to Christ, who was the "life of the Law".

Although the Law was "glorious" as a "true figure and shadow" of Christ, unless it actually led to Christ it became a snare and a stumbling-block. The "form" could be mistaken for the "power". The early Quakers believed that Christ had been working and revealing himself during the time of the Law, and that those who saw through and beyond the Law to Christ were saved by him out of the fall. "The dispensation of the Law was as darkness, in respect of the clear dispensation of the Gospel, yet even in this darkness did Christ the true light shine."[23] The role of the Old Testament prophets was to denounce those whose understanding of the Law rested merely on the fulfilment of outward requirements without a change of heart, and to call people back to the "life of the Law", to (the Quakers believed) Christ the witness in the heart. George Fox explored this idea in relation to the prophet Isaiah:

> The Prophet [Isaiah, Chap. 29] was in the life of the Law, but the people were here gone from the life of the Law, therefore the life turned against them that were from that of God in them; and the life of the Law, the life turning against them, being one with that of God in them, which they were gone from, so the life blinded them, and their ears became heavy... Now they that had the outward covenant, the words of the Law, and stood for the outward, and were not guided with the inward, their tables became a snare unto them, and a trap, and a stumbling-block.[24]

Because the outward Law had become a stumbling-block and unable to give power over sin, a new dispensation was necessary. This New Covenant was preached by Christ, who called people out of "outward forms" to worship God in Spirit and in truth. Christ "overthrows the outward, and brings in the inward", and he brought the mind "out of the changeable which the mind was in in the outward, to the life, the light."[25] The Law had indeed always pointed in this direction, for "the Gospel lay hid within the Law as within a veil",[26] but few had seen beyond the outward and come to Christ, and known power over sin. "For this cause", wrote

Nayler,

> is the ministration of the letter done away, because it could not make perfect the comers thereto, as pertaining to the conscience; and the ministration of the Spirit preached in its stead, which gives perfect knowledge of sin, and perfect redemption from it, and from all things which the Law without could not, and the Spirit doth testify it perfectly in the conscience, which the letter cannot: though the letter may show a man his condemnation, yet it cannot give life, it can show the duty, but not give power to perform it; so the letter kills, but the Spirit giveth life.[27]

This new spiritual dispensation was preached by the apostles, but after their death the message was lost as people began to slip back into outward forms. In this state of apostasy the church was to remain until the mid-Seventeenth Century, when the true gospel was known again in the Quaker movement:

> and so this everlasting Gospel [is] being preached again, and received again, as it was in the apostles' days... and salvation is known again, and received and obeyed by us, the people called Quakers.[28]

This phrase "as it was in the apostles' days" helped shape the early Quakers' understanding of themselves. They drew parallels between their experience and that of Christ and the apostles, describing the rejection of their message by their opponents in terms of the rejection of Christ by the Jews: "[those] owning not the life of the Law, they owned not Christ when he came, who was the end of it",[29] The opponents of Quakerism treated the Scriptures in the same way that the Jews had treated the Law, ignoring the witness of God within, and the "life", in favour of the "letter". They failed to see beyond the types and shadows to Christ the substance and fulfilment, and so the letter became a snare and a stumbling-block. The proper role of the New Testament was not to point to Jesus come in the flesh, but beyond that to Christ the substance:

> What is the proper intent of the letter? is it not to testify of the

Spirit, and to end in the Spirit; the Law, the prophets, John led to Christ in the flesh, and he was to be the increasing light, when they should decrease. Christ's words in the flesh, the apostles' words afterwards, and all words since are but to lead to Christ in the Spirit, to the eternal living substance.[30]

Those who "confess Christ to be come in the flesh, and yet won't own his light,... it is but a fleshly profession of Christ come in the flesh, and not a spiritual."[31] Christ could not be known spiritually except by revelation, and as he was known, so the Scriptures were seen and understood properly as pointing to Christ. This was the challenge of early Quakerism to those around them who had the Scriptures, yet possessed no true knowledge of God:

> How do ye feel Christ exercising his office as a prophet amongst you? Do you hear him in all things? Doth he reveal the Father to you? For none knows him nor the Father but by revelation. Doth he open the book of conscience to you? And the book of the Law, and the book of the prophets, and the book of the parables, and the book of life? that you may see your names written in the book of life, and Christ, the end of the Law and prophets, and the sum and substance of all.[32]

The revelation of Christ was not simply a revelation of "the divine" without reference to Scripture, but a revelation *of* Scripture within the heart, which pointed to Christ the substance.[33] The outward history of salvation recorded in the two testaments became the inner history of the believer returning to God again.

"These things are to be found in Man's Heart"
The Inner Revelation of Scripture

Without the saving work of Christ in the heart, the early Quakers believed, all people remained in the darkness of the fall and the apostasy, in bondage in Egypt, enslaved by sin and the devil. The Scriptures spoke of the outward bondage of the people of Israel in Egypt, of the exodus, of the work of the prophets in calling a

rebellious people back to God, of John's ministry, and of the coming of Christ. The Scriptures also looked forward to a day of judgment and the end of the world, and to the coming of the new Jerusalem. For the first Quakers these accounts were far more than records of past happenings and forecasts of future events. They bore testimony to the great truths that shaped their experience of God.

The account of the exodus from Egypt to the promised land has been a rich source of imagery in Christian thought for conversion, the Christian pilgrimage and death.[34] The language used by the Quakers suggests, however, that for them the biblical accounts were not mere allegories, but became deep spiritual realities as they were revealed in the heart. This is to say that they did not simply make intellectual connections between their experience and the distant historical events of the Old Testament; rather, the way they wrote implies that they saw themselves as experiencing at first hand (albeit spiritually), the same things as those to which the Scriptures bore witness.[35] This is best demonstrated by the texts themselves, and the following account, quoted at length, shows how William Dewsbury saw his conversion experience in terms of a revelation of the Scriptures in the heart:

> Then I returned to my outward habitation and calling I had in the world, and there laboured with my hands, my mind being turned within to wait upon the Lord in the way of his judgments; and this I witness, the administration of Moses in which Cain is banished, Esau reprobated, Pharaoh plagued, and the first born of Egypt slain, and my will brought in subjection for the Lord to do with me what his will was,... and in this condemned estate I lay crying in the depths of misery without any hopes of deliverance by anything I could do to pacify the wrath of God, till the administration of the prophets, that witnessed to my soul there where [sic] free redemption laid up for me in the Lord Jesus, and by the power of the word of their testimony there was a secret hope raised up in me to wait for his coming, there I waited till the administration of John;... who discovered more of the mystery of iniquity in me in his administration,... in this condemned estate I lay waiting for the coming of Christ Jesus, who in the appointed time of the Father

appeared to my soul, as the lightnings from the east to the west, and my dead soul heard his voice, and by his voice was made to live, who created me to a lively hope, and sealed me up in the everlasting covenant of life with his blood;... and I witnessed according to the testimony of Scripture, death reigns over all from Adam to Moses, and Moses until the prophets, and the prophets until John, and from this day the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force; there is no rest to the soul till Christ be manifest, and this the Scripture witnesseth; and I witness these Scriptures fulfilled in me, in the year according to the account 1645,[36]

We see here the influence of the early Quaker view of history as consisting of a series of ages or dispensations. (Adam till Moses, the time when "death reigned"; the time of Moses, the Law; the time of the prophets; the time of John the Baptist; and the time of Christ.) All these different ages had to be experienced in the heart before Christ could be known. This idea may be seen in Fox's writings, and he includes it in his account of his early "openings":

> As these things came to be opened in me, I saw death reigned over them from Adam to Moses, from the entrance into transgression till they came to the ministration of condemnation, which restrains people from sin that brings death. Then, when the ministration of Moses is passed through, the ministry of the prophets comes to be read and understood, which reaches through the figures, types and shadows unto John,... whose ministration prepares the way of the Lord by bringing down the exalted mountains and making straight paths. And as this ministration is passed through, an entrance comes to be known into the everlasting kingdom.[37]

It is not clear whether Fox is indebted to Dewsbury for this idea, or the other way round; or whether they arrived at a similar point independently. We may be certain, however, that Fox visited the Wakefield area in 1651, and states that "William Dewsbury and many more were convinced" (*Journal*, 73). Although Dewsbury says that his experience of coming to Christ and witnessing the fulfilment of certain Scriptures took place in 1645, the inner revelation of the Scriptures did not end with the appearance of Christ. Christ's work in overcoming

sin and restoring the soul to perfection had also to be witnessed, and Dewsbury dates his experience of being freed from sin as happening in 1651, presumably after Fox's visit. It seems possible that Dewsbury came to view his earlier experiences in the light of Fox's framework for conversion. His description of perfection is in terms of the fulfilment of various New Testament texts, including the message of the book of Revelation:

> The witnesses that stood before the God of the earth, and had power to plague the earth; having finished their testimony, the beast ascends out of the bottomless pit, and makes war against them, and kills them;...
>
> I see the abomination that maketh desolate,... standing in the holy place where it ought not; and then was I led by the Spirit into the wilderness and tempted of the devil, that the Scripture might be fulfilled...
>
> In that day... I witnessed these Scriptures fulfilled in me of Paul's condition wherein he complained as then I did, who found a law in his members warring against the law of my mind... And as I was crying to the Lord... the word of the Lord came unto me saying, My grace is sufficient for thee, I will deliver thee...
>
> The Spirit of life from God entered into the witnesses, and they stood upon their feet,... then mystery Babylon the great... was discovered in me... Jesus Christ was revealed from heaven in flaming fire, pouring vials of wrath upon her, and rendering vengeance upon all in me that knew not him... and purged away the filthy nature... so through the righteous law of life in Christ Jesus, I was made free, and am from the body of sin and death; and through these great tribulations my garment is washed, and made white in the blood of the Lamb, who hath led me through the gates of the city into the New Jerusalem... where my soul now feeds upon the tree of life... I witness I am regenerated and born again of that immortal seed, and hath pertaked on the first resurrection, on whom the second death hath no power.[88]

Another description of conversion may be found in John Whitehead's tract *The Enmity Between the Two Seeds* (1655). Whitehead was converted to the Quaker message by the preaching of Dewsbury, and the similarity between this tract and Dewsbury's *The Discovery of the Great Enmity of the Serpent against the Seed of the Woman* is not confined to the title. Whitehead speaks of his experience of lying in

captivity, of God's judgment on Babylon the great, of the prophets "who see Christ's day" ministering comfort to his soul, and eventually of the end of the world:

> Thus was I led through the World to the end of it, who am not of it; for no more I live, but Christ liveth in me, and the life which I now live, is by faith in the Son of God, who is my head, my Lord and my king, and ruleth me by his Spirit, which is my guide: glory and eternal praises be unto the living powerful God, for ever and ever; whose presence is dreadful, whose power makes the earth to tremble.[39]

The progress of the soul from the darkness and bondage of the fall back to God again was a reflection of the outward history of God's dealings with the human race recorded in the Scriptures. The high degree of identification by the early Quakers of the outward account with the inner revelation was a result of their experience. This experience was the crisis point of their lives, and also, they believed, of history. Christ had appeared to them by his Spirit, and the end of all things would not long be delayed. The whole of the Scriptures was read in this light, as an account of the work of Christ. The work of Christ in the heart was one with the work of Christ in history. This meant that wherever the work of Christ was fully known, and the soul brought out of the fall and restored to God again, the message of the Scriptures was also known.

In theory this led to the belief that Christ could save people who had no knowledge of the outward Scriptures, since his light (the witness of God in the heart) shone in all people. This was a point taken up by Richard Baxter in a controversy with Richard Hubberthorne. Baxter inquired whether the light was sufficient to reveal Christ incarnate and crucified. Hubberthorne's reply showed he believed the light revealed the essential truth of these things:

> the light of Christ is the same in America which it is in England, and those heathens in America which love the light of Christ and walk in it, although they have not the Scriptures, doth know more of Christ, his life, death, intercession and teaching, than those heathens in England, which have the Scriptures of these things, yet hate and despise the light which gives knowledge of Christ, and of his work of salvation, and those heathen which fear God and work righteousness shall be accepted of God, and counted Christians, when those called Christians which neither fear God nor work righteousness, but despise his light and deny the sufficiency of it, shall be accounted heathens.[40]

The idea of redemption without a knowledge of the Scriptures was the point at which the first Quakers were compelled to arrive, if their ideas were pushed to their logical limits. Since Christ was the end and and substance of the Scriptures, where he was revealed, the message or heart of the Scriptures was also revealed. Knowledge of the outward history was therefore not strictly necessary. That the first Quakers felt this to be a very tenuous position may be seen in their evangelistic campaign amongst the American "heathens". Fox provides an account of a debate in North Carolina with a Doctor who denied the existence of the light in heathens:

> I called an Indian... and asked him if that he did lie and do that to another which he would not have them do the same to him, and when he did wrong was not there something in him, that did tell him of it, that he should not do so, but did reprove him. And he said there was such a thing in him when he did any such a thing that he was ashamed of them. So we made the doctor ashamed in the sight of the governor and the people.[41]

The witness of God in the heart that condemned sin was not sufficient to bring salvation unless it was obeyed, however; and the appearance of the light was scorned by those with no knowledge of the Scriptures as well as those acquainted with them. Whereas there was sufficient power in the light for people to obey, it is clear from their vigorous evangelism that the first Quakers believed few would do so without being taught about Christ and his work. The following is an account of Fox's

preaching in America:

> I went among the Indians. Their young king and others of their chief men were very loving, and received what I said to them. And I showed them how that God made all things in six days, and made but one man and a woman and how that God did drown the old world, because of their wickedness, and so along to Christ, and how that he did die for all and for their sins, and did enlighten them; and if they did do evil he would burn them, and if they did well, they should never be burned.[42]

As time passed, the belief that the light could save independently of knowledge of the Scriptures became a starting point in Quaker thought, (see note 40). Once this had happened, the place of the Scriptures in salvation was no longer clear. The revelation of the light gradually ceased to be seen as a revelation of the message of Scripture, but rather as a revelation of "the divine"; and for one recent writer this might equally well be described in terms of Buddhism or Hinduism.[43] This is a long way from the message of the first Quaker prophets, for whom Jesus Christ and his work in history and the heart was all.

"In the Same Spirit that Gave Forth the Scriptures" The Early Quaker Understanding of Inspiration

One result of the early Quaker belief in a period of apostasy that ended by the reappearance of Christ in their midst, was their profound sense of breathing the same spiritual air as the apostles. This belief was founded on the conviction that they possessed the same Spirit that had filled the apostles and the writers of the Scriptures. It was this that marked the Quakers out as distinctive in an age when the letter of the Scriptures was available to all:

> Now here is the chief difference betwixt them and us. They have the words and declaration of Christ and the apostles, declared from the Spirit of life; and we have the Spirit, which the words were

> declared from, not another, but the same eternal Spirit which they had, do we witness.[44]

The true message of the New Covenant which had been lost for centuries during the apostasy was known again:

> And so this everlasting Gospel [is] being preached again, and received again, *as it was in the apostles' days*... and salvation is known again, and received and obeyed by us, the people of God called Quakers.[45]

This had profound implications for their understanding of their experience, and of their evangelistic message.

The first Quakers believed that their experience of Christ revealed in the heart was one they shared with the writers of the Scriptures and the apostles. This conviction is seen in their descriptions of how the Scriptures were written. The writers of Scripture were declaring what they had directly experienced, either as it had been revealed to them by the Spirit, or as they had received it from Christ while he was on earth. They were not recording earlier tradition, or the results of human learning. Those who wrote were taught by God, and in the case of the Old Testament writers, they were enabled to see beyond the types and shadows of the Old Dispensation to their fulfilment in Christ.

> [Moses'] understanding was opened to see to the beginning, and he beheld God's eternal power in the creation, and the movings of the Spirit upon the face of the waters, and his bringing light out of darkness; and when this was opened to his understanding, and he had seen it, then he declared it, and it was written, and that which was written was called Scriptures; but that which Moses declared, was the word of life, which was in the beginning; and this Word was with God, and was God;... and into this life was Moses gathered, and had his understanding opened, that he could see to the beginning... and there was no tradition to give him knowledge of it.[46]

We see here again the typical Quaker distinction between the letter and the Word. The emphasis is on Moses' immediate experience. The activity

of the Word of life in creation was "opened to his understanding" (i.e., revealed); and he was enabled to "see" the power of God and the movings of the Spirit. Moses had "seen" Christ, the Word; and then "declared it" in writing, which was "called Scriptures". Similar thoughts are to be found in the writings of other Quakers:

> For it is justly to be believed that what Moses' wrote of Adam, and of the first times, was not by tradition, but by revelation.
>
> It was God that taught Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Moses, and all the prophets.
>
> For they that knew God, it was by the Spirit of God, and such writ forth the Scriptures, who first knew God by the Spirit.
>
> God spake to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and Moses, and the holy prophets, who spoke forth the Scriptures as moved by the Holy Ghost; and in this principle, the light or word of faith, they received the holy doctrine of God by this infallible Spirit and guide, raised up to open their understandings by which they knew the Lord, and the revelation of his mind, what they were to speak and reveal to any people.[47]

Immediate knowledge of God by revelation lay at the heart of the experience of the saints in all ages. A reliance on second-hand knowledge from the Scriptures or from human tradition ("forms without power") was the essence of the apostasy. This belief brought the Quakers into conflict with those of their contemporaries who held that immediate revelation had ceased.[48] To them, the Quakers' claims appeared to be spiritual arrogance, a claiming of equality with the apostles. Evidence that the early Quakers identified themselves closely with the apostles abounds. Sometimes the link is conscious and overt, at others it is implicit in the language they employ.[49]

The belief that they were living in the Spirit that gave forth the Scriptures affected the early Quakers' attitude to their own writings in relation to the canon of the Scriptures. One opponent had

this to say of early Quaker meetings: "sometimes they only read the epistles of Fox and Nayler, which according to their principles are to them of as great authority as the epistles of Peter and Paul".[50] The Quakers were wary of making this claim, although they came very close to it. Indeed, it was the logical outcome of their attitude to inspiration. Samuel Fisher, one of the least cautious of early Quaker writers, satirized the concept of a closed canon as the ultimate spiritual authority:

> O Spirit of God be silent now, blow no more, nor make any more prophets now for these many hundred years to come, but be subject thyself to be tried by the touchstone of the writings of such prophets, as thou hast already moved to write God's mind, or so many at least, as it seems good to us now to authorise and establish into a standard for the trial of thyself, as well as all false spirits.[51]

Attacks of this kind on the Scriptures were unlikely to win many converts to Quakerism, and other writers were more circumspect, although a similar challenge is implicit in what they write. Isaac Penington, for example, spoke of "the words of Christ, of the apostles, *or any words spoken from the same Spirit in these days*" as leading to Christ "the eternal living substance".[52]

It is important to realise, however, that the early Quakers' stance was not that they were equal with the apostles and prophets, and therefore their writings are of equal value with theirs. Any "equality" they might have with the writers of Scripture was founded on the belief that they shared with them the same experience of Christ revealed in the Spirit. Moses and the other prophets and apostles saw the Word (Christ) and declared it; thereby writing the Scriptures. Similarly, the Quakers saw their speaking and writing as a declaration of what was revealed to them. The following quotations help make this connection clear:

> [The true ministers of the Word] received power from on high... and

those things which they had heard, and seen, and felt, and tasted of, and had handled, of the word of life; which life was manifest in them; this they preached, and were sent to turn people from darkness to light, and from Satan's power unto God's power.

[God] hath called and chosen faithful witnesses, and given his powerful ministry, by the gift of the Holy Ghost, as it was in the apostles' days, and now many are called to declare abroad the things which we have heard, and seen, and handled; and the Gospel of Christ is received by the revelation of God's eternal Spirit, and Son in our hearts.[53]

The call to preach and "spread abroad" that which had been revealed by Christ was a matter of great urgency. The experience of the early Quakers was one with that of the apostles, and their message and ministry was likewise the same: "to turn people from darkness to light, and from satan's power unto God's power." Very little distinction appears to have been made between the written and spoken declaration of the revealed Word by the early Quakers. Both were intensely practical: the early Quakers aimed to challenge the whole world to come to the judgment seat. "This is the day of thy visitation, O Nation, wherein the Lord speaks to thee by the mouth of his servants in word and writing."[54]

Biblical Interpretation

The early Quakers believed that all Scripture was to be experienced in the heart, not simply acknowledged with the mind. Their experience of Christ's appearing in the heart was so compelling that all Scripture was seen in the light of it. For the early Quakers, all Scripture spoke of Christ and his work. The experience of Christ the Word gave life to the letter of Scripture; but the outward "history" gave shape to the experience. The experience in the heart and the testimony of the Scriptures fed and informed one another, as the

following quotations from Fox's *Journal* indicate:

> This I saw in the pure openings of the light, without the help of any man, neither did I know where to find it in the Scriptures; though afterwards, searching the Scriptures, I found it... What the Lord opened in me I afterwards found was agreeable to [the Scriptures].

> I also saw how people read the Scriptures without a right sense of them, and without duly applying them to their own states... They did not turn in to find the truth of these things in themselves.[55]

Fox found that his revelations were "agreeable" to Scripture, not contrary to, or superseding them. The second quotation shows how a right application of the Bible led to a finding of "the truths" of Scripture within. This is not to be understood as an intellectual exercise, but rather as revelation, or "opening", to use Fox's word:

> As man comes through by the Spirit and power of God to Christ who fulfils the types, figures, shadows, promises, and prophecies that were of him, and is led by the Holy Ghost into the truth and substance of them, then are they read and understood with profit and great delight.[56]

Once the believer had come through the different "ministrations" to Christ the "truth and substance", then the types and prophecies of Christ contained in the Scriptures could be seen and understood. Christ was the central focus of the Scriptures, and the Quakers found references in the Bible to their experience of him, and also to the political events around them, and to their social situation. These references appeared in a variety of forms; sometimes as prophecies, sometimes as "types and shadows", and sometimes as symbols or allegories of spiritual truths and principles revealed in the heart.

Typology, Allegory and Prophecy.

Typology, allegory and prophecy did not constitute a rigid three-fold method of interpretation in early Quaker thought. The

boundaries between the three are sometimes blurred, and although they frequently appear in early Quaker texts, there is no conscious employment of these categories as separate interpretative methods. It is, however, convenient to distinguish between them and describe how the terms are being used here.

Typology is prominent in Fox's writings, but found elsewhere in early Quaker tracts. It assumes a system of "types" or "shadows" which are later fulfilled by Christ the "Substance". The Old Covenant was a shadow of the New Covenant in Christ, and the details and events of the Old Covenant find parallels in the New, and are fulfilled by Christ. Thus the temple and its worship, the Exodus, the prophets and the monarchy are all shadows of Christ, the great High Priest and one true sacrifice, the leader, prophet and King of his people, (see above, Chap. 1, 51-59).[57] Typology is therefore rooted in history, as the historical events of the Old Covenant find their fulfilment in later historical events -- in the appearance of Christ -- and was a common interpretative method in early Christian exegesis.[58] The early Quaker use of typology was distinctive, however, since it was also deeply rooted in their eschatology. The appearance of Christ was understood both in terms of the incarnation, but more importantly in terms of his *spiritual* (yet equally historical) coming in the Quaker movement after the apostasy. This belief in the second and spiritual coming of Christ meant that the early Quakers tended to treat the New Testament institutions of baptism and communion as types that were fulfilled in Christ's appearance in their midst, (see above, 56-7). The Old Covenant was seen by them as a type of the New; and there are sometimes indications that the whole of the Scriptures served as a type of the experience of the Quakers. They

traced a progression from the "outward" to the "inward" in the Scriptures, and this strand of thought gained in significance as the early eschatological vision faded. As Isaac Penington's words (quoted more fully above) indicate: "the law, the prophets, John led to Christ in the flesh,... Christ's words in the flesh, the apostles' words afterwards, and all words since are but to lead to Christ in the Spirit, to the eternal living substance."[59]

Allegory was not a term used by the early Quakers, but their practice of finding deeper "spiritual" truths lying beneath the superficial meaning of the text is here called allegory. It may be contrasted to their use of typology in that it is not primarily historical in its attitude to the text. That is to say, historical events and characters in the Scriptures are interpreted as referring to spiritual truths. The early Quakers often spoke, for example, of the "first birth" and the "second birth". This was linked with the words of Christ to Nicodemus in the Gospel of John, (John 3:3-7), but also with the accounts of Cain and Abel, Esau and Jacob, Ishmael and Isaac. In each case the firstborn son was "cast out" in favour of the second born. Cain, Ishmael and Esau were taken as symbols of the flesh, the natural birth, and of reprobation. They were contrasted with the second birth, which is of the Spirit. The second birth was the "election". The imagery of first and second also appears in connection with Christ, who was the second Adam. Here the Old Testament characters are not treated historically, but allegorically, as spiritual principles. This kind of interpretation may be found frequently in early Quaker writings:

> If thou wait in the light, thou wilt see two striving in the womb; and here is nation against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; and these are at variance; and the life of one is the death of the other. Now that which lets thee see that Cain and Ismael are goodly

children, who are of the first birth, yet they must not enter, nor have any share with the seed of the free woman, but must be cast out, and therefore another seed must be witnessed, which the promise is to.

News, news, prophane Esau, that man of the field, which despiseth his everlasting birth-right, who is the first birth, who would have slain Jacob, he is become an outward Christian, but he hath not put off his rough garment.[60]

This particular allegorical use of Scripture emphasises the early Quakers' understanding of the fall (or the apostasy) and the restoration in Christ. People were either still in the darkness of the fall and the apostasy, or they had come to Christ the light, and were now restored to perfection. There were two states: the reprobation, and the election; and Christ was calling people out of one and into the other. This was the challenge of the Quaker message:

> Now all people try yourselves, whether you be in the first birth, or you be born again: there is a first Adam, and there is a second Adam, and they who are in the first, bear his image, and they who are in the second bear his image... the one the seed of God, the other the seed of the serpent, and an enmity is put between them by God, and there can be no uniting them in one.[61]

The process of "trying" oneself is described by George Fox:

> I saw the state of those, both priests and people, who in reading the Scriptures, cry out much against Cain, Esau, and Judas, and other wicked men of former times, mentioned in the Holy Scriptures; but do not see the nature of Cain, of Esau, of Judas, and those others in themselves. And these said it was they, they, they, that were the bad people; putting it off from themselves: but when some of these came, with the light and spirit of Truth, to see into themselves, then they came to say, 'I, I, I, it is I myself that have been the Ishmael, and the Esau', etc. For then they come to see the nature of wild Ishmael in themselves, the nature of Cain, of Esau, of Korah, of Balaam and of the son of perdition in themselves, sitting above all that is called God in them.[62]

The early Quakers did not reject these Biblical characters as historical figures, but it is clear that they felt that a knowledge that Cain or Esau were wicked was not an adequate understanding of the Scriptures. This is entirely in keeping with their conviction that Scripture had to

be revealed, or "opened" to the heart, before its truth could be known. The early Quaker emphasis was therefore on the realisation that these characters represented spiritual principles of wickedness, violence and greed, and that these evils were present in the heart. This could only be seen by the "light and spirit of Truth". Thus the use of allegory by the first Quakers was not a mental exercise designed to discover a system of spiritual metaphors. Rather it was a spiritual crisis brought about by the revelation of Christ, in which the sinful and apostate heart was judged and condemned. It must be noted that the idea of the spirit of Cain, or Esau, fitted into the historical scheme of the five dispensations (Adam till Moses, the Law, the prophets, John the Baptist, and Christ), which were to be revealed in the heart. Once people had come to Christ, all evil that resided in their hearts was destroyed, and they became a new creation. Given the early Quakers' belief in perfection, it was no part of their thinking that "there is something of Cain in all of us" and that this was an inevitable part of the human condition until death. Allegory was not used to explain human characteristics, but as a means of challenging people to repent and turn to Christ. It was, therefore, like typology, closely linked with the early Quakers' eschatological outlook.

Some passages of Scripture were treated by the early Quakers as prophecies of the Quaker movement and the end times they believed they were experiencing. One of the best examples of this is found in the early Quaker interpretation of the following text as a reference to the appearance of Christ: "I will raise them up a prophet from among their brethren, like unto [Moses], and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him," (Deut 18:18). This

was referred to Christ in his incarnation, but also to his coming after the apostasy in the Quaker movement.[63] Similarly, the words of the prophet Joel quoted by Peter at Pentecost were seen by the Quakers as being fulfilled again in the fresh outpouring of the Spirit in their midst. The many prophetic tracts of the early Quakers consisted largely of strings of Biblical quotations that were seen as being fulfilled in seventeenth-century England, or applicable to the condition of those around them. The following quotation from Edward Burrough shows various Scriptures being alluded to as specific prophecies of the Quaker movement:

> And O thou North of England who art counted as desolate and barren, and reckoned the least of all nations, [Micah 5:2, Matt 2:6] yet out of thee did the branch spring, [Isaiah 11:1], and the star arise [2 Pet 1:19] which gives light unto all the regions round about; in thee the Son of Righteousness appeared with wounding and with healing; [Mal 4:2], and out of thee the terror of the Lord proceeded, which makes the earth to be removed. [Isaiah 24:20][64]

The apocalyptic material of both Testaments was also interpreted in terms of prophecies about the circumstances and experiences of the first Quakers.[65] They displayed little interest in the context of the material they regarded as prophetic, and had no difficulty in embracing the idea that a certain prophecy might apparently be fulfilled twice, once in the lives of Christ and his apostles, and then a second time in the Quaker movement. The time of eschatological fulfilment after the apostasy was upon them, and all Scripture was interpreted in view of this one overwhelming fact.

The early Quakers' use of typology, allegory and prophecy were all governed by their eschatological outlook. All three kinds of interpretation were concerned with the time of present fulfilment in history. This was true of typology, where former events, characters and

institutions were fulfilled by Christ in the heart; of allegory, where characters or imagery were treated as spiritual principles present in the heart and revealed by Christ; and of prophecy, where passages of the Scriptures were seen as being fulfilled in the experience of the Quakers. These interpretative methods were ways in which the Quakers perceived links between their experience of Christ, the Word, and the written account of the Scriptures. The impression gained from reading the tracts of the early Quakers is not that their biblical interpretation was contrived or artificial -- although it is often idiosyncratic -- but that it arose naturally out of their experience of Christ, their belief that these were the last days, and the consequent urgency of the evangelistic campaign.

Proclaiming the Word

Early Quaker writing and preaching were declarations of the revelation of the Word (Christ), and their aim was to bring people out of outward "forms" (including, ultimately, preaching) to Christ, the one true teacher and prophet. Unlike the world's preachers, they did not study "by natural arts and sciences to speak their brain study by the glass".[66] The Quakers' sermons, by contrast, were an obedient speaking or writing of what was given by the Spirit, just as the early Quakers believed the Scriptures had been. These assumptions about the nature and purpose of preaching and writing produced a distinctive style of proclamation among the first Quakers.

Firstly, the language used by the early Quakers was the language of the King James version of the Bible. This was partly a result of the degree to which the early Quakers identified themselves with the

prophets and apostles. If they were in the same Spirit that had inspired the writers of Scripture, then Biblical language seemed the only appropriate means of describing their experience. Their attitude to those who raised the issue of the original language of the biblical texts was dismissive. The "original" was Christ, who existed before the many languages came into being; and the Quakers were in Christ, the original. Therefore knowledge of Hebrew and Greek was irrelevant.[67] With this extraordinary and frustrating reply their opponents had to be satisfied. The Quakers appear also to have believed that the language of the Bible was the language of the Holy Spirit; and the "railing" against the ministry of other denominations, for which the Quakers were notorious, consisted of strings of phrases plucked from the Scriptures, ("hireling", "dumb dog"). Those who reproached the Quakers for their violent language could be denounced as reviling the very language used by the Holy Spirit.[68]

Another important factor governing the nature of early Quaker preaching and writing was their belief that it should arise out of immediate revelation. This affected the length of their sermons. "His continuance in speaking," wrote an opponent in a description of a typical Quaker preacher, "is sometimes short, sometimes tedious, according to the paucity or plenty of his revelations."[69] From the point of view of the Quakers, this was a demonstration of true ministry:

> The ministers of Christ preached by the Spirit, according as the Spirit gave them utterance, and sometimes continued preaching until midnight. But the teachers of this age are limited by a glass, and preach by a glass, and when their hour is out, their time of preaching is ended; and that which they have studied for beforehand, that they preach, and not that which they have received immediately from God.[70]

Quaker preaching was therefore extempore, progressing not as a careful

argument in logical steps, but as the various thoughts and insights came to the mind of the speaker. This is not to say that their sermons were random and illogical, but their aim was not to persuade the intellect, so much as to convict the heart. The power of the Quaker declaration to convince and convert was demonstrated by the large numbers who became Quakers, many of whom recorded their experience of hearing the Quaker message. Features of the writing and (as far as it is possible to tell) the preaching of the early Quakers include the heaping up of biblical texts to prove a point, often with some such phrase as "and so you may see that..."; the use of material from the Old Testament prophets applied specifically to certain groups or individuals who were addressed by name; the claim that the words spoken were God's words; the habit of proceeding from text to texts via a recurring word or phrase; and the constant returning to a central idea which was sometimes repeated almost in the form of a refrain. Not all of these features are present simultaneously in all Quaker tracts, but they are all common.

An example combining many of these features is found in a tract addressed to "all the Masters of Ships and Seamen" by George Fox.[71] Throughout the work, the phrase "and now all ye Sea-men and Fisher-men" appears, followed by an exhortation to turn to Christ: "let your eyes be to Christ", "consider this call of Christ", "you may see it is Christ that saves", "consider [ye]... that are not disciples of Christ". Fox makes use of the accounts of the calling of Peter, and James and John; of the Gospel material referring to fishing and the sea; of Paul's sea journeys; and of the text in 1 Timothy which refers to those who have made "shipwrack" of faith. He also refers to a variety of Old Testament passages, including the story of Jonah, and Psalm 107. To this tract

Fox added a post script: "Concerning how the World is called the Sea", which appears to chase through the references to the sea in both Testaments, although not in order. Fox was known for his thorough knowledge of the Scriptures, and it seems clear that in writing this tract a wealth of texts came to his mind, all linked by the word "sea". This method of writing (and, presumably, preaching), was typical of the early Quakers, and was a result of their insistence on spontaneity. Attention to context was necessarily scant, if not completely absent; since it was hardly possible for a speaker preaching an extempore sermon to check where the passages which came to mind occurred. In any case, the speaker or writer was only declaring what was given by God; and if the Spirit saw fit to refer to a particular text, it was not for the prophet to question him. Similarly, if the real significance of the Scripture lay in its present immediate revelation in the heart, then historical context could be of little consequence. The habit of ignoring context was a dangerous one, however; and on at least one occasion a lack of research led Fox into a reckless use of Old Testament precedents to support his opinions on women's ministry.

To those who remained outside the Quaker movement and did not share the Quakers' experience of Christ revealed within, this style of proclamation was absurd. Early Quaker sermons seemed to consist of sentences "hanging together like ropes of sand"; being nothing more than "a mixed bundle of words and heap of nonsense".[72] Thousands of others, however, were brought to the point of conviction by early Quaker preaching, and experienced the revealing and judging presence of the Word in the heart for themselves. This was indeed the aim of the Quaker message: "to bring all people to be taught of God by the Spirit".[73]

When Christ the Word was known within, then the declaration of him by the Quakers made sense. The experience of Christ's presence and activity was the very heart of Quakerism:

> For the Word cuts asunder, hews down all wickedness, corruption, pride, and honour of men, that all the honour and glory may be given alone to God; he hews down the first birth, that he may establish the second; and the Word of the Lord is a fire, burns down all corruptions, burns up all that it has hewn down, that nothing can stand against it; this is the Word by which the saints are born again.[74]

Conclusion

The early Quakers' attitude towards Scripture, and their use of it, were both governed by their eschatological outlook. The long night of apostasy was at an end, and Christ had come again by his Spirit to teach his people and restore them back to God. Christ was the active Word of God, and the Scriptures bore witness to his work. Like John the Baptist, they were not themselves the light, but testified to the light.

In an age where the Scriptures were readily available in the vernacular the early Quakers insisted that a knowledge of the "letter" was insufficient to save. The Scriptures needed to be revealed within the heart. The several "dispensations" (Adam till Moses; the Law; the Prophets; John the Baptist; and Christ) were revealed within by Christ, and the soul was brought back to God again. The work of Christ in history was one with the work of Christ in the heart. Christ was the substance of the Scriptures, and where he was revealed, the message of the Scriptures was known. Few heeded his witness within, however; and the early Quakers travelled and preached to challenge a complacent or antagonistic world to come up to the judgment seat of God. The end of all things was at hand, and the Quakers called all people to repent

before it was too late.

By the close of the Seventeenth Century few Quakers still maintained the early eschatological vision, and this change in outlook affected their attitude to the Scriptures. The present was no longer seen as the time of glorious eschatological fulfilment to which the Scriptures referred, whether by typology, allegory or prophecy. The belief that Christ had been working in all ages and places was no longer held in tension with a vigorous belief in the centrality of Christ's incarnation and Second Coming. Typology and prophecy were thereby emptied of their vitality. Allegory also underwent subtle changes. Perfection was no longer a goal to be achieved by all believers on earth, and so the idea of the five historical dispensations of Scripture that were to be revealed in the heart, and that led up to restoration and perfection, no longer had any real meaning. The use of allegory in early Quaker thought had been rooted in this scheme of salvation as a means of challenging people to repentance. Without this idea of the soul being led by revelation through the biblical dispensations in chronological order to a state of perfection in Christ, allegory became little more than a finding of spiritual metaphors for the human condition and the universal work of the light.

The dramatic appearance of Christ by his Spirit in the time of eschatological fulfilment was the central point of reference in the early Quakers' understanding both of the Scriptures and of their own experience. They believed that Christ had been working in all ages, and that those who had been saved under previous dispensations had been saved by Christ; but this belief was governed by their conviction that they were living in the age when the Son of God was being fully

revealed. Once this sense of living in the last days had vanished the universalist tendencies implicit within Quakerism were able to develop. Instead of finding in the Scriptures references to the coming of Christ in the Quaker movement, later Quakers saw evidence of the gracious work of the light in all ages.

Endnotes

[1]Richard Baxter, *The Life and Times of Richard Baxter*, (1696), in *Works*, vol. 1, part 1, 1-412, 90.

[2]An answer given by some Quakers on trial in Wales in 1658, in Besse, *Sufferings*, 739. A similar answer was given on another occasion by Nayler: "[the Scriptures] are a true declaration of the Word, that was in them who spoke them forth". Quoted in Fogelklou, *James Nayler the Rebel Saint*, 95. When asked whether there was not a "written word", Nayler retorted, "where readest thou the Scriptures that they are called the written word? The Word is spiritual, not seen with carnal eyes," ibid..

[3]Parnell, *Christ Exalted Into his Throne*, (no date, but c1654), in *Collected Writings*, 11-27, 16.

[4]Samuel Fisher, *Rusticos ad Academicos in Exercitationibus Expostulatoriis, Apologeticus Quatuor. The Rustick's Alarm to the Rabbies*, (London: Robert Wilson, 1660), 55. The alliteration towards the end of this quotation is part of Fisher's idiosyncratic and flamboyant style. He exclaims elsewhere over Owen's "weak wottings and piddling putations", 164, and remarks "what a bawbling and blerting dost thou make of thy boyish bolts out of the cross-bow of thy crooked conceit", 126. This characteristic is without parallel, as far as I am aware, in early Quaker writings.

[5]Fox, *Journal*, 40.

[6]See Morton, *The World of the Ranters*, 82-84. Morton suggests that there was a spectrum of belief within the very loose movement labelled Ranter. He notes that some maintained that "in so far as the Scriptures were a guide they could only be so when symbolically interpreted by the inner light" 82, and that others "speak of the History and the Mystery as conflicting forms of truth" ibid., and that from this point it was "no long step to total rejection" 83.

[7]Bunyan, *Vindication of Gospel Truths*, 182, 193.

[8]Ibid., 183. The beliefs Bunyan attributes to the Ranters and consequently to the Quakers are by no means a good account of early Quaker thought. Most of them contain a grain of truth, and it is usually possible to see why he thought that the early Quakers held these beliefs; for example, he says that "they will not own Christ without them", 182, whereas they would, but not at the expense of knowing Christ in the heart.

[9]Hubberthorne, *Something that lately passed in Discourse between the King and R. H.*, (London: P.L. for G.C., 1660), 4-5. See also Fell's description of the relationship between experience and Scripture:

> Now though these Scriptures bear testimony to the truth of this, yet the Scriptures are not our testimony only, for we have our testimony in the same Spirit as was in them that spoke forth the Scripture; and these Scriptures bears testimony with us, and we to them, and so are in unity with the same Spirit which gave them forth,

In *A True Testimony from the People of God (who by the World are called Quakers) of the Doctrines of the Prophets, Christ and the Apostles*, (1661), *Remarkable Passages*, 233-293, 243.

[10]Hubberthorne, *The Rebukes of a Reviler*, 126.

[11]The main message of the Scriptures as a whole was the saving work of Christ. This was the central organising force in early Quaker thought, and it meant that uncongenial passages were interpreted in such a way as to make them fit the eschatological framework of early Quakerism. This process appears to have been ingenuous and to have arisen naturally out of their conviction that Christ was all, and that the whole Bible bore testimony to him. The early Quakers did not feel that they had the option of rejecting difficult passages as untrue, although they did sometimes treat them as non-existent.

[12]Fox, *Journal*, 34.

[13]Fox, *A Word from the Lord to all the World*, *Gospel Truth Demonstrated*, 15-21, 17-19.

[14]John Crook, *Truth's Principles*, (London: no printer's name, 1663), 4; Farnworth, *A Woman Forbidden to Speak in Church, the Grounds examined, the Mystery opened, and the Ignorance both of Priests and People Discovered*, (London: Giles Calvert, 1654), 5. Fell had harsh words for those who relied on the "letter": "though you profess a God and a Christ from the records without you, yet your profession and inheritance is of the evil one." From an Epistle "To all the Professors of the World", (1656), in *Remarkable Passages*, 73-91, 86.

[15]Burrough, *A Declaration to all the World*. The centrality of revelation in early Quaker thought is noted by Canby Jones:

> This belief in direct knowledge by revelation was part of the sense of eschatological fulfilment which filled both Fox's teaching and that of many other radical Puritans. Immediate revelation of truth was one aspect of Christ's direct and personal reign upon earth which Fox believed had already begun.

"Fox's Teaching on Redemption and Salvation", (Ph.D. dissertation, Yale, 1955), 77. Jones elsewhere outlines the importance of the scriptures in Fox's thought, stressing the biblical nature of Fox's revelation, "The Bible: Its Authority and Dynamic in Fox and Contemporary Quakerism", *Quaker Religious Thought*, Spring 1962, vol. 4, no. 1, 18-36, 22.

[16]Hubberthorne, *A True Testimony of Obedience*, (no printer's name place or date, but written in Chester in 1653?), 1.

[17]See Isaac Penington, *The Way of Life and Death made Manifest*, (1658), in *The Works of the Long Mournful and Sorely Distressed Isaac Penington*, 2 vols., (London: Benjamin Clark, 1681), vol. 1, 1-42: "it had been no honour to John to have been taken for the light, his honour was to point to it: nor is it any honour to the Scriptures to be called the Word of God, but their honour is to discover and testify of that word", 7.

[18]Christopher Taylor, *A Faithful and True Witness to the Light*, (no printer's name or place, 1675), 3. This is comparatively late, but as we have seen, the Quaker view of creation was not bound up in their eschatological outlook, and therefore underwent little change as the early vision faded. See above, Chap. 2.

[19]Nayler, *Love to the Lost*, 1; Fox, *To all Kings, Princes and Governors*, (1677), *Gospel Truth Demonstrated*, 603-625, 603; Burrough, *Description of the State of all Mankind*, 116.

[20]Fox, *A Hammer*, 312.

[21]Nayler, *Love to the Lost*, 53; *Salutation*, 27.

[22]Nayler, *Salutation*, 27; William Smith, *A Morning-Watch or the Spiritual Glass opened*, (London: Robert Wilson, 1660), 4.

[23]Keith, *Universal Free Grace*, 7. This idea gained in importance as the early vision of the Quakers faded.

[24]Fox, *A Visitation to all You that have long had the Scriptures, but are found out of the Life of them*, (1656), in *Gospel Truth Demonstrated*, 53-63, 53, 58.

[25]Ibid., 58-9.

[26]Keith, *Universal Free Grace*, 7. The tendency towards universalism is marked in this tract, as the title itself suggests. This was the path later Quaker thought was to follow.

[27]Nayler, *Love to the Lost*, 51.

[28]Fox, *To all Kings*, 606.

[29]Fox, *A Visitation*, 55.

[30]Penington, *Way of Life*, 8.

[31]Fox, *Possession above Profession*, (1675), in *Gospel Truth Demonstrated*, 503-513, 503.

[32]Fox, *To all Kings*, 607.

[33]There is also a secondary kind of revelation which the early Quakers believed they experienced. This dealt with moment-by-moment instructions on where to go, and what to say in a particular situation. Sometimes they claimed supernatural knowledge of people's circumstances, (see Fox's *Journal*, passim.).

[34]This may be seen in popular hymns, e.g. "Guide me. O thou great Jehovah", where crossing the Jordan is a symbol of death, and Canaan of heaven.

[35]This is linked with the belief held by the early Quakers that they were "in the same Spirit that gave forth the Scriptures"; and was anticipated in the writings of earlier seventeenth-century radicals. See Endy, *William Penn and Early Quakerism*, where he observes that these thinkers had "a tendency to view the whole divine drama of redemption portrayed in Scripture as an allegory of the struggle between the first and second Adam within each man," 43. For the early Quakers, however, the revelation of the Scriptures within was more dynamic and effective than this.

[36]Dewsbury, *Discovery*, 17, 18.

[37]Fox, *Journal*, 31.

[38]Dewsbury, *Discovery*, 18-19.

[39]John Whitehead, *The Enmity Between the Two Seeds*, (1655), in *The Written Gospel Labours of that Ancient and Faithful Servant of Jesus Christ, John Whitehead*, (London: T. Sowle, 1704), 1-42.

[40]Hubberthorne, *The Light of Christ*, 20. A similar statement is found in Barclay's *Apology*, 84:

> God, in and by this light and seed, invites, calls, exhorts and strives with every man, in order to save them; which as it is received and not resisted, works the salvation of all, even of those who are ignorant of the death and sufferings of Christ, and of Adam's fall, both by bringing them to a sense of their own misery, and to be sharers in the sufferings of Christ inwardly, and by making them partakers of his resurrection, in becoming holy, pure and righteous, and recovered of their sins; by which also are saved they that have the knowledge of Christ outwardly, in that it opens their understanding, rightly to use and apply the things delivered in the Scriptures, and to receive the saving use of them,

The differences between Hubberthorne's words and Barclay's are subtle but significant. In the first place, the context must be considered. Hubberthorne was participating in a heated controversy, and was driven to this position on Scripture by Baxter's denigration of the light. Barclay, on the other hand, was setting out his ideas an apologetic work; and the quotation above is found in the context of a defence of Barclay's 5th. and 6th. propositions: "Concerning the universal redemption by Christ, and also the saving and spiritual light, wherewith every man is enlightened." The possibility of redemption without knowledge of the Scriptures is taken as a starting point in Barclay's theology, and this paved the way for the idea of revelation unconnected with the message of Scripture. Barclay himself did not reach this point, as the quotation above indicates, but the role of the Scriptures in his scheme of salvation is not that of the first Quaker prophets. (For further discussion, see below, Chap. 3, 139-147).

[41]Fox, *Journal*, 642.

[42]Ibid., 643.

[43]See, for instance, Brinton, *Religious Philosophy of Quakerism*.

[44]Fell, *True Testimony*, 242.

[45]Fox, *To all Kings*, 606. My italics.

[46]Smith, *Morning-Watch*, 1, 2.

[47]Barclay, *Apology*, 124; Fox, *To All Kings*, 607; Audland, *Innocent Snare*, 22; Taylor, *Faithful and True Witness*, 4.

[48]For a full discussion of the range of beliefs on this subject in the Seventeenth Century, see Nuttall, *Holy Spirit*, especially chapters I and II.

[49]See Fox's *Journal* for examples of a Quaker likening his situation to that of the apostles. An example of "apostolic" use of language may be found in the following words of Humphrey Smith, which are distinctly Pauline in flavour:

> What then? do I hereby in the least make void, contemn, slight, vilify or deny the Scriptures? God forbid; nay, I had rather my pen might fall out of my hand or my arm from my shoulder, or my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth for ever, then I should go about to make void the Scriptures of truth,.. but if I should say the Scripture is God, I should be a blasphemer like unto others; Do I herein deny the Scriptures? Nay, rather I establish the Scriptures in its place, (In *True and Everlasting Rule*, 14.)

[50]Higginson, *Irreligion of the Northern Quakers*, 70.

[51]Fisher, *Rusticos ad Academicos*, 73. Fisher also opposed the idea of verbal infallibility of the Biblical texts in his controversy with John Owen.

[52]Penington, *Way of Life*, 8. (My italics). See also Taylor's *Faithful and True Witness*, where an opponent accused him and Penn of claiming that "Fox was as good a prophet as Isaiah". Taylor denied this, but added, "however, what absurdity can there be in the comparison, to compare a blessed Gospel minister with a blessed prophet of the Lord?" 16.

[53]Burrough, *A Measure of the Times*, 196; Howgill, *Lamentation*, 2.

[54]Burrough, *A Warning from the Lord to the Inhabitants of Underbarrow*, (1654), *Works*, 1-17, 12.

[55]Fox, *Journal*, 33-34, 31. The force with which Fox asserts this may reflect the growing circumspection of the Quakers in the 1670s.

[56]Ibid., 32. See also Nayler's assertion that "[the light] will open all parables and read all Scriptures within you in your measure", *Discovery*, 2.

[57]Surprising similarities to Calvin's theology emerge here:

> The history of the Jews was not only a preparation for the coming of Christ; it was also a pre-enactment of him and his work, Certain persons and institutions were types or figures or images... A type is not for Calvin an accidental resemblance between the two covenants, but something deliberately set up by God's providence to pre-enact the incarnate Christ, and thus to stand for Christ and stand for him effectually, This does not mean that the historical entity had no reality of its own... But the primary -- not the secondary but the primary -- meaning of

those people's lives and of the events and institutions is that they were types, figures and images of the Christ to come, of the Spirit, of the Gospel, of the New Covenant, [T. H. L. Parker, *Calvin's Old Testament Commentaries*, (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1986).]

[58]See Jack B. Rogers and Donald K McKim, *The Authority and Interpretation of the Bible*, (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1979), 9.

[59]Penington, *Way of Life*, 8. Robert M. Grant points out in his book *A Short History of the Interpretation of the Bible* (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1965), that "the whole typological method is based on the presupposition that the whole Old Testament looks beyond itself for its interpretation" (40). He also indicates with others that the Gospel of John provides "clear warrant for looking beyond the New Testament itself for exegesis not only of the Old Testament but also of the Gospel" for three reasons: "(1) The Christian tradition contained more about Jesus than was written down either by John (xx 30-31) or by the other evangelists (xxi 25). (2) Jesus had more to say to his disciples than what he said during his ministry (xvi 12 cf. xxi 25). (3) The Spirit was to come to the disciples, to teach them and remind them of all that Jesus had said (xiv 26), to guide them into all truth (xvi 13)." (41). The early Quakers looked to the Spirit of Christ for their understanding of the Scriptures, often quoting texts from John's Gospel to support their case for doing so.

[60]Fox, *Several Treatises Worthy of Every True Christians Serious Contemplation*, (1689), in *Gospel Truth Demonstrated*, 1052-1090, 1082; Howgill, *Lamentation*, 34. See also Fox, *Way to the Kingdom*, 3.

[61]Nayler, *A Discovery*, 6.

[62]Fox, *Journal*, 30.

[63]E. g. Henry Clark, *A Description of the Prophets, Apostles and Ministers of Christ*, (London: Giles Calvert, 1665): "a prophet hath the Lord God raised up amongst you, hear ye him saith the Lord, in all things,... Christ Jesus the Son of God, the light of the world that makes manifest in you sin and evil deeds... and this is Christ the prophet, that meets with you whithersoever you go," 16-17. See also Fox, *Gospel Truth Demonstrated*, passim; John Perrot, *A Visitation of Love and Greeting to the Turk*, (London: Thomas Simmons, 1656), 3.

[64]Burrough, *Camp of the Lord*, 66. The idea that England was an elect nation was not peculiar to the Quakers, see Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, (London: Penguin University Books, 1973), 168.

[65]See for instance Parnell's treatment of Daniel's vision of the great image in *The Watcher*. A certain amount of allegorising was employed by Parnell to decode the images and language of the passage. See also Burrough's use of Revelation in *A Measure of the Times*, and his *Testimony Concerning the Estate of the True Church*, (1658), in *Memorable Works*, 413-438.

[66]Hubberthorne, *Rebukes of a Reviler*, 128.

[67]There are many examples of this kind of retort in the controversial tracts of the early Quakers. See, for instance Fox, *Pearl*, 140-1; Hubberthorne, *A Reply to a Book Sent Forth by the Priest of Berwick*, (no date), in *Several Books and Writings*, 7-36: "here I charge thee that thou hast no more original than Pilate thy father had; Pilate had Hebrew and Greek, which crucified Christ, which was the original... for the Word was in the beginning before any tongue was", 24. There seems also to have been a concept of a language of the saints not known to the world in early Quaker thought. "The natural man may know the natural languages... [but by the] Spirit the saints are guided into the one pure language, which the world knows not." Audland, *Snare*, 22. This idea is in keeping with their rejection of university education as a means of "making ministers of Christ".

[68]E.g. Nayler, *An Answer to a Book called the Quakers' Catechism put out by Richard Baxter*, (no printer's name or place, 1656), 4.

[69]Higginson, *Irreligion of the Northern Quakers*, 71.

[70]Burrough, *Just and Lawful Tryal*, 225.

[71]Fox, *A Testimony for all the Masters of Ships and Seamen to read over*, (1677), in *Gospel Truth Demonstrated*, 537-584.

[72]Higginson, *Irreligion of the Northern Quakers*, 71.

[73]Hubberthorne, *Rebukes of a Reviler*, 132.

[74]Fox, *Way to the Kingdom*, 3. For a discussion of the style of early Quaker preaching, see Richard Bauman, *Let Your Words be Few. Symbolism of Speaking and Silence among seventeenth-century Quakers*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), chap. 5, "Some Plough, Some Weed Out, and Some Sow: Preaching and Passage in the Process of Conversion", 63-83. See in particular his excellent analysis of how early Quaker preaching functioned:

> the heavily repetitive and rhythmic quality [in a sermon by Fox] is very well suited to illiciting the participative involvement of the auditors... To the extent that the auditor of such preaching could begin to anticipate the repetitive words and cadences of the minister and to be caught up in expressive collaboration with him, there might well arise a sense of immediate co-participation in the utterance that would make the listener feel that the minister's words were echoed within himself, 78.

CHAPTER 3

THE FADING OF THE EARLY VISION

Introduction

During the course of the second half of the Seventeenth Century Quakerism underwent a variety of changes characteristic of enthusiastic religious movements entering the second generation. The chaotic atmosphere of the early years which was attended by many revivalist phenomena gave way to more formalised patterns of worship and lifestyle. The early Quakers' theology was modified to take into account their changing outlook and disappointed eschatological hopes. Coupled with this were the effects of prolonged and intense persecution. The re-ordering of the outward structures of the group was overt and conscious. It constituted an abandonment of a system of loosely affiliated congregations in favour of a hierarchy of weekly, monthly and yearly meetings, instigated by George Fox. The modification of their theology was by contrast covert and unconscious. The changes were at first subtle, which has given rise to a misleading impression of continuity of thought in the first century of Quakerism. This chapter gives an account of these changes, exploring some of the implications of the developments in early Quaker theology.

The Early Quaker Vision

At the heart of early Quaker belief and practice lay the experience of Christ. This encounter was dramatic, bringing the individual to a sense of conviction, and resulting in a radically changed lifestyle and outlook. Christ appeared in order to reveal and judge sin by his

light, and to purge it away. The soul was restored by him out of the fall back to the state of perfection enjoyed by Adam and Eve before they fell -- indeed, to a higher state than that; to that of Christ who never fell. This, the early Quakers believed, was the message of the everlasting Gospel which had been lost since the apostles' days. Its dramatic reappearance signified nothing less than the end of the apostasy and the coming of Christ. Other religious groups were still waiting in vain for an outward physical Second Coming, having failed to recognise Christ's spiritual Second Coming in the heart. As seen above, George Fox gave an account of this in his Journal:

> Now while I was in prison here [Devon] the Baptists and Fifth-Monarchy-Men prophesied that this year Christ should come and reign upon earth a thousand years. And they looked upon this reign to be outward, whenas he was come inwardly in the hearts of his people to reign and rule there, these professors would not receive him there. So they failed in their prophecy and expectation, and had not the possession of him. But Christ is come, and doth dwell in the hearts of his people and reigns there.[1]

The fact that Christ's Second Coming was spiritual and inward did not mean that its scope was restricted merely to the personal, however. The events enacted in the heart (revelation, judgment, purging and restoration) were a microcosm of the events to be enacted throughout the whole creation. It was this vision that inspired so many Quakers to publish warnings to individuals, towns, cities and nations. The Day of the Lord was at hand, and all were summoned to the judgment seat of God. This was the central focus of the message they proclaimed:

> This is the day of thy visitation, O Nation, wherein the Lord speaks to thee by the mouth of his servants in word and writing... And all people, mind that measure of light within you, which the Lord hath enlightened you withal, for the Lord is risen to teach his people himself, and he is fulfilling his prophecy in thy ears, O Nation, they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, saying, know the Lord, for they shall all know me from the least of them unto the greatest of them saith the Lord; for I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts... The Lord will overturn, overturn the

nation, and will create new heavens and new earth, wherein shall dwell righteousness... And by his sword will the Lord plead with all flesh, and the slain of him shall be many; corrupt judges and officers will the Lord sweep away, and their name shall be no more found in the nation, the fire is kindled and the sword is drawn, happy is he that keepeth himself from fighting against the Lord and his work.

> The rod is over you which must rule nations, trumpets sounding and sounded, the just will rule, the lamb will have the victory; woes, woes and miseries are outgoing upon the heads of the wicked, the judgments are come upon the world, the day of glory is appearing, and hath appeared, the throne and the sceptre that is everlasting is come and witnessed and set over the world.[2]

As these passages shows, the battleground of good and evil was to be found not only in the human soul, but also in a wider social setting. The experience of Christ "risen to teach his people himself" was bringing about the fulfilment of Jeremiah's prophecy, and this indicated the imminent arrival of the long-awaited eschatological fulfilment: "The Lord will overturn, overturn the nation, and will create new heavens and new earth, wherein shall dwell righteousness". At this time, the Lord would sweep away all "corrupt judges and officers". George Fox issued a similar warning to the people of Carlisle in 1653, saying "that the day of the Lord was coming upon all their deceitful ways and doings and deceitful merchandise, and that they were to lay away all cozening and cheating".[3] Another Quaker linked social injustice with the coming judgment:

> Oh you high and lofty ones! who spendeth God's creation upon your lusts, and doth not feed the hungry, nor clothe the naked, but they are ready to perish in the streets; both old and young, lame and blind lieth in your streets, and at your mass-house doors, crying for bread, which even melteth my heart, and maketh the soul of the righteous to mourn: did not the Lord make all men and women upon earth of one mould, why then should there be so much honour and respect unto some men and women, and not unto others, but they are almost naked for want of clothing, and almost starved for want of bread? and are you not all brethren, and all under the government of one king? Oh repent! lest the Lord consume you, and be ashamed and clothe the naked and feed the hungry, and set the oppressed free.[4]

The social implications of the Quaker message cannot be viewed simply in

terms of the reformed lifestyle of those who became Quakers. The Quakers were convinced that the time was at hand when the Day of the Lord would be manifested against all evil, and all evildoers would be swept away and the whole earth purged: "the fire is kindled and the sword drawn". Indeed, the Quakers believed that they were witnessing the fulfilment of this judgment; and this led them to record the fate of their opponents alongside records of their own sufferings for the Truth.[5] The final outcome would be the triumph of justice over evil, and the establishment of God's righteous reign:

> Then shall the ransomed of the Lord, and the righteous seed, whom the nations have slain, and persecuted; the prophets, and the holy men of God, and all that have been slain for the testimony of Jesus, rejoice over the deceit and it shall be sung that day, the Lord God omnipotent reigneth, who will ascend above all principalities and powers, thrones and dominions, and tread down all under his feet, that the earth may be filled with his glory, and behold, he cometh quickly in a moment, and sudden destruction be upon his enemies.[6]

> The Lord... will create new heavens and new earth, wherein shall dwell righteousness, in which all the chosen of the Lord shall rejoice for ever more; and all the men of war shall lay down their armour and weapons of war; and nation shall not lift up war against nation any more; for the Lord will establish righteousness and peace; this will the Lord bring to pass in thee, O England, through the destruction of that which now liveth, and through the resurrection of that to life which now lieth in death. Hear, O Land, give ear, O People, for the Lord of heaven and earth is now turning the world upside down, all old things shall pass away, all things shall become new by fire.[7]

The rule of God in early Quaker thought, while spiritual, was at the same time both temporal and spatial. Although George Fox was not expecting Christ to return physically to begin a political reign on earth for a thousand years, it would be wrong to conclude from this that the early Quakers had no concept of the kingdom of heaven on earth. The outward events of history were part of God's unfolding plan of establishing his kingdom. Edward Burrough saw the significance of the Civil War years for the purposes of God: "the Lord is about his great and wonderful work in

thee, and all the wars and contentions in thee, O Land, hath been but a making way for this work of the Lord".[8] There was a continuity between the religious experience of the first Quakers and the outward establishment of the kingdom. As evil was overcome and defeated in their hearts by the saving work of Christ, so they too would play a part in the overcoming of evil in the world:

> And he is bringing a handful out of the North Country, who have been eye witnesses of his power, majesty, and glory, and of his noble acts, and though but a handful, yet they are blessed, and his increase shall be great, for they shall subdue the nations, and kings shall be tributary to them, and they shall be his witnesses to the ends of the world... And then shall the restorer be seen, who shall restore the earth into its first purity.[9]

Here we see the restoration of women and men to the state of pre-fall perfection finding a parallel in the restoration of the earth "into its first purity" by Christ the restorer. The eschatology of the early Quakers was both realised (on the personal level) and imminently to be realised (on the earth). This is reflected in their frequent references to Christ as "come and coming".[10] The first Quakers saw themselves as "eye-witnesses" of God's "power, majesty,... glory, and... noble acts" in their experience of Christ within, and this led them to believe that they would "subdue the nations", and take the message of Quakerism to the ends of the earth, before it was restored to its original perfection. These were not events belonging to a distant future, but were in the very process of taking place. All around them they saw signs of God's kingdom breaking in, and of the great and terrible day of the Lord:

> The Lord is risen in his glory, and is arising in his power, to tread down the mountains: all nations make way, make way... Awake, awake: arise, arise, and stand all up to judgment: let the heathen be awakened, for the Lord shall roar out of Zion, and utter his voice as a whirlwind; and the heavens and earth shall shake, and the mountains shall melt at his presence,... Awake, all you that are asleep, and stand up to judgment; the angel of judgment is come, and the time of harvest draws near... multitudes, multitudes shall be slain, and bound

in bundles, and cast into the lake, and into the valley of decision."

This, then, was the fiery vision of the first Quaker prophets. By the close of the century it no longer dominated the atmosphere of Quaker thought, and the beliefs which had motivated the early movement were reinterpreted.

Organizational Changes

The beginnings of the Quaker movement and its early development have been explored and described in detail elsewhere,[12] but a brief sketch will be helpful here, in order to provide a context for the changing beliefs of Quakerism.

In the early 1650's Quakerism consisted of loosely affiliated groups held together by a common religious experience and a shared system of beliefs. Communication and unity were promoted by the work of travelling ministers. The significance of these men and women in holding the early movement together ought not to be underestimated. Braithwaite, writing at the beginning of this century, likens them to "life-blood circulating through the body... [preserving] its health by the vitalizing influence of their inspiring presences. Through them far more than through organization, the Quaker groups had become one living fellowship."[13] Another important factor influencing early Quaker organization was the steady flow of epistles containing advice and encouragement sent to local congregations by the travelling ministers.[14] These ministers worked in conjunction with the local leaders, who were spiritual "overseers" chosen by the local groups. In many areas from an early date the leading local Quakers met together monthly, and it was on this basis that Fox was later able to establish his system of church order.

The spread of Quakerism during the 1650's was both rapid and successful. The movement began in the North of England and spread through the whole of the British Isles as a result of the vigorous evangelistic campaign of the mid-50's. The Quakers' main success was not numerical, however; for although they were the most successful Revolution sect, their numbers still only amounted to 1% of the population. The work of Barry Reay suggests that "Quakerism was remarkable not for its total membership, but for the sheer scope of its impact", for even in counties not noted for their response to the Quaker message, there can have been few people who did not know of at least one Quaker family either in their own or in a nearby parish.[15] The strange behaviour of the early Friends marked them out from the rest of society -- their prophetic acts and menacing declarations, their vigorous campaign against "hireling priests" and tithes, the frightening phenomena associated with their meetings (quaking, fainting, etc.), and their rejection of accepted social etiquette (hat honour, bowing, courteous salutations and the polite use of the "you" form to an individual) -- all these features combined with the rapid spread of the movement to make the Quaker threat appear very real indeed to those outside. Reay's contention is that fear of an armed Quaker uprising contributed significantly to the change in public opinion which brought about the Restoration of the Monarchy in 1660.[16]

Given the prevailing hostility towards Quakerism, it is not surprising that the Restoration marked a turning point in the history and fortunes of the movement. Persecution which before had been largely sporadic and at the whim of local authorities became systematic and brutal under the various repressive laws of the Clarendon Code.[17] Many hundreds of Quakers were imprisoned, and this had far-reaching effects on the

movement. Not only were congregations frequently robbed of their local leadership; they were also deprived of the support and encouragement of the travelling ministers. By the mid 1660's many of these early itinerant preachers had died, and most of those remaining alive suffered lengthy imprisonments. This effectively destroyed the means by which the movement had been held together during the 50's. Threatened at the same time by controversy within its own ranks, Quakerism stood in need of re-organisation if it was to survive. In 1666, after being released from imprisonment in Scarborough Castle, Fox began his work of travelling throughout the country to set up Monthly and Quarterly Meetings. "And the Lord opened to me and let me see what I must do, and how I must order and establish Men's and Women's Meetings in all the nation, and write to other nations, where I came not, to do the same."[18] In some areas county meetings were already held, and Fox was able to build upon the existing organization and supplement it with Monthly Meetings and Women's Meetings. The resulting structure was no longer congregational in principle, but closer to presbyterianism,[19] with individual congregations ceasing to be autonomous, but becoming instead part of a hierarchy of Quarterly and Monthly Meetings which had jurisdiction over local groups. This system was not established without considerable opposition from some quarters, and the debate centred upon the conflict between the rights of the individual to personal guidance and the authority of the group.[20]

This, then, was the situation of Quakerism by the mid-70's.[21] Fox's pattern of meetings was eventually successfully established, and it is in this context of change that the changing vision of the Quaker movement is best seen.

The Changing Vision

Opinion is divided amongst historians of Quakerism about the nature and extent of the changes which took place within the movement over first century of its life. Many describe a period of "quietism" which followed the early enthusiasm; and two important Quaker scholars from the beginning of this century see Barclay's *Apology* as a highly significant factor in this development. Barclay was seen by both Rufus Jones and Braithwaite as being heavily influenced by his earlier Calvinist training. This led him, they believed, to interpret Quakerism within a Calvinist framework, stressing human depravity and the gulf between the Creator and his creation. Braithwaite found in Barclay's theology an inadequate expression of Quaker doctrine which "would become the parent of a spiritual passivity whose negations would react disastrously in later periods of the Society, especially in the low value placed on ministry and on the intellect".[22] A different interpretation of Quaker history was put forward by Brinton. "Modern histories of Quakerism," he noted, "almost without exception speak of a century of 'quietism' different in character from the Quakerism of the earliest period". He is at pains to point out that this aspect of Quakerism was present from the start: "it is not difficult to show that the first generation of Quakers were Quietists in the technical sense of the word as truly if not more so than later generations". Although expressions of the basic doctrine of "inner light" varied, claimed Brinton, the central message was always the same. The only real difference was the fact that "in the time of the founders the exhilaration and enthusiasm which accompanies a new discovery, and the enormous vitality required to resist cruel persecution, led to a more fervent effort to convert the world." Brinton saw no conflict between the thought of Barclay

and that of the first Quaker writers. Indeed, Brinton's aim in writing was to "bring back Quakerism to its original faith in the universal saving light as Robert Barclay, the Quaker apologist, described it." Another scholar concluded that "the Quakers exhibit a remarkable continuity of beliefs over a period of a century and a half."[23]

The contention of this thesis is that Quakerism underwent many changes during the first fifty years of the movement, and that such changes were inevitable. All enthusiastic religious groups, which have as their central organising factor a belief in the imminent arrival of the age of eschatological fulfilment, must change in response to the disappointment of their hopes. In the case of the Quakers, this delay was combined with the need to reorganize the movement in the face of persecution, as we have seen. The historians cited above do not define Quaker beliefs in an eschatological framework, and consequently either attribute the changes in the movement to a different source (e.g. Barclay's *Apology*), or fail to see any significant change taking place. The failure to accept that the changes in Quakerism were not simply superficial lay, in Brinton's case, in selecting "the universal saving light" as Quakerism's central tenet. The Quakers spoke of the light from the earliest days of the movement, but as this thesis has argued, they intended something different by it. This creates the impression of "remarkable continuity of beliefs" mentioned above. If the belief that Christ had come again (and was coming) is taken to be the true heart of early Quakerism, then a different account of the changes within the movement becomes possible.

The following sections take up the themes of the previous two chapters on the work of Christ and the Bible and examines them in the light of the changing vision of early Quakerism.

The Changing Understanding of the Work of Christ

The abandonment of their eschatological framework had far-reaching effects on the early Quakers' understanding of Christ and his work. Chapter 1 explored the work of Christ as restorer, reversing the effects of the fall, conquering sin and evil and restoring people back to God again. This was the message of the everlasting gospel, and had been achieved by Christ through his earthly life, death and resurrection. The age of the apostasy had obscured this gospel until it was lost, and people continued to live in "forms of godliness" while "denying the power". In the mid-Seventeenth Century the everlasting gospel was once again revealed and the work of Christ in the heart was known by those responding to the Quaker message. Men, women and children were brought out of the fall back to God again in their thousands, hearing and obeying the voice of Christ as he was revealed in their hearts. It was primarily in this context that the early Quakers spoke of the light. It was the eschatological presence of Christ revealing, judging and purging away sin, rather than a philosophical or ethical principle. Another important aspect of Christ's work in early Quaker thought was of Christ as the fulfilment of the Old Dispensation and the bringer in of the New. All the practices and rituals of the Old Covenant found their fulfilment in Christ, and were abolished by him. The dark night of the apostasy saw the church slipping back into the empty forms of the Old Covenant, and the message of Quakerism called people out of these forms again to Christ and the New Covenant. These three understandings of Christ's work (Christ as restorer, Christ as light, and Christ as the fulfilment of the Old Covenant) were to undergo gradual but significant changes as the early Quakers' eschatological vision faded away.

Christ the Restorer.

As we have seen, the early Quakers' understanding of the work of Christ as restorer relied on their view of history as consisting in three ages: the creation, the fall and the restoration. In the beginning, as we have seen in Chapter 1 above, God "brought forth a pure creation in his wisdom".[24] The function of the creation, and particularly of the human race, was to manifest the glory of the creator. After the fall the whole of creation was in disarray. Man and woman no longer reflected the glory and wisdom of God in ruling over the creation. Instead they were driven out into the earth, into darkness, under the rule of the devil and "the creatures". Through his obedient and glorious life, death and resurrection, Christ undid the fall, conquered sin and the devil and restored all things back to God again. The early Quakers visualised this as the creation of a new and higher state -- that of Christ, which never fell. Those entering the new state were "in Christ", a new creation.

This view of history was overlaid by the early Quakers' understanding of the apostasy. Although Christ's work was in one sense complete, its effects had been obscured by false teaching since the apostles' days as people slipped back into their sinful ways, remaining in the fall and in darkness. The early Quakers' religious experience led them to believe that they were experiencing the re-appearance of Christ and the end of the apostasy. Christ had not only paid the penalty for sin, but had also destroyed it, and this led the Quakers to lay claim to perfection. Fox, as we have seen, believed that he had been restored to the pre-fall state: "now was I come up in spirit through the flaming sword into the paradise of God," but also to a higher state: "more steadfast... than Adam's in innocency, even into a state in Christ Jesus that should never

fall."[25] Full redemption was not postponed till the afterlife, but was to be enjoyed in the present. In terms of the individual soul, early Quaker eschatology was fully realised. The soul was a microcosm of the whole creation which was in the process of being restored. The message of Quakerism would be carried throughout the whole world and then "shall the restorer be seen, who shall restore the earth into its first purity."[26]

By the close of the Seventeenth Century the Quakers were no longer anticipating the imminent conversion of the nations to their message and the end of all things. This meant that the unrealised and external aspects of their eschatology had all but disappeared. Belief in the shortly-to-be-fulfilled work of Christ throughout the whole creation vanished, leaving an understanding of the work of Christ which pertained only to his work in the human heart. No further fulfilment was to be awaited, certainly not in the imminent future. The difference that this abandoning of their early eschatological outlook made is crucial, for it was the belief that they were living in the glorious dawning of the new age that gave meaning to the early Quakers' personal experience. In the early days of the movement the Quakers were convinced that their religious experience signified that the final crisis of history was taking place. Without this conviction their experience assumed a very different significance, and was reappraised by the Quakers in order to take their change in outlook into account.

This reappraisal was almost certainly an unconscious one. A good example may be seen in William Penn's *A Brief Account of the Rise and Progress of the People Called Quakers.*[27] This was written in 1694. The first section consists of Penn's account of salvation history. He describes the creation and fall, the law and prophets, and eventually, the

coming of Christ. God restored "fallen man again by a nobler and more excellent Adam... [who came] into the world [to] prevail against [Satan] and bruise his head, and deliver man from his power." Penn then outlines the beginning of the apostasy, "a falling away from the power of godliness... Christians degenerated apace into outsides." The true church "fled into the wilderness". In the "last age", however, Penn notes that "some steps" were taken towards the restoring of the church, but that the reformers also fell into the apostasy. The heart of their fall lay, according to Penn, in the fact that they "betook themselves very early to earthly policy and power". Penn describes the fate of the various Independent, Baptist, Seeker and Ranter groups of the Seventeenth Century before coming to the first appearance of the Quakers;[28]

> It was about this time, as you may see in G.F.'s Annals, that the eternal, wise, and good God was pleased in His infinite love to honour and visit this benighted and bewildered nation with His glorious dayspring from on high; yea, with a most sure and certain sound of the word of light and life.[29]

It is at this point that the difference between Penn's understanding of the place of the Quaker movement and that of the first Quaker prophets may be seen; for Penn did not go on to describe his belief in the imminent end of the age. The appearance of Quakerism signified the restoration of the true church, but *not* the final restoration of all things. This is seen in the title of another work of Penn's, which he called: *Primitive Christianity Revived in the Faith and Practice of the People called Quakers*, (1696).[30] The church was brought back to the point from which it had declined during the apostasy; it was "revived" to its former glory, but the revelation given to the Quakers did not amount to the glorious final consummation.

By the time Penn was reflecting on the theology of the first

Quakers the perspective of the movement had changed. Their focus was no longer on the present and the imminent future, for they no longer retained a sense of living in the midst of the time of eschatological fulfilment. The future lengthened in front of them, and the past behind them. There was a greater sense of the continuity of the work of Christ in all ages. Penn wrote that:

> [Christ's] power was not limited in the manifestation of it to that time; for both before and since his blessed manifestation in the flesh He has been the light and life, the rock and strength of all that ever feared God.[31]

The special sense of being restored by Christ *in the present* was emptied of much of its meaning by the loss of any real expectation that Christ was about to restore the whole creation. It became difficult for the Quakers to distinguish between their experience and that of the "true believers" in any age. They began to draw back from their early dogmatic stance on perfection, (see above, 49-50). William Penn was at pains to explain in 1694 that the Quakers had "never held a perfection in wisdom and glory in this life or from natural infirmities or death as some have with a weak or ill mind imagined or insinuated against them."[32] Robert Barclay was even more circumspect in his discussion of perfection, noting that "this perfection [doth] still admit of a growth, where remaineth ever in some part a possibility of sinning, where the mind doth not most diligently and watchfully attend unto the Lord."[33]

By the close of the Seventeenth Century, then, the early Quaker understanding of Christ as restorer had changed considerably. Their view of history as consisting in three ages (the creation, the fall, and the restoration) still persisted, but it was not held in tension with their eschatological interpretation of history. The restoration of all things

was no longer at hand, merely the restoration of "primitive Christianity", the message of which was far removed from the proclamations of the early Quaker prophets.

Christ the Fulfilment of the Old Covenant.

When discussing Christ as the fulfilment or substance of the Old Covenant the early Quakers presupposed a view of history which consisted of two ages -- the age of the Old Covenant, and the age of the New Covenant. This was not in conflict with their division of history into three ages (see above, 27), since in both cases they believed that the apostasy had intervened and that it had only come to an end in the new revelation of Christ in their midst. What was significant was the present and the near future, when the final restoration would take place. Christ had fulfilled all the shadows and types of the Old Dispensation in his earthly life, and the effects of his fulfilment were being realised in the Quakers' midst, where Christ was revealed as prophet, priest, judge, and king. This was not confined to the realm of private experience, for the Quakers proclaimed the coming Day of the Lord when Christ would be revealed as judge and king throughout the whole world.

This understanding of the work of Christ likewise underwent changes when the early Quakers ceased to expect the imminent end of the age. These changes were at first subtle. We have seen in Chapter 1 above how the temple and its worship, the law, and the prophets all found their fulfilment in Christ. The Old Covenant, wrote Fox, pertained to "natural and outward things" and the New to "inward and spiritual things".[34] By the time William Penn was writing his *Rise and Progress of the Quakers*, his emphasis was on the *nature* of the New Covenant in contrast to the Old,

rather than Christ's fulfilment of the types and shadows in the midst of his people the Quakers. The important thing for Penn was the fact that the New Covenant was inward and spiritual. This somewhat lengthy quotation illustrates the direction of Penn's thought:

> Old Jerusalem with her children grew out of date, and the New Jerusalem into request, the mother of the sons of the gospel day. Wherefore no more at Old Jerusalem nor at the mountain of Samaria will God be worshipped above other places; for behold He is by His own Son declared and preached a spirit, and that He will be known as such, and worshipped in the spirit and in the truth! He will now come nearer than of old time, and He will write His law in the heart, and put His fear and spirit in the inward parts, according to His promise. Then signs, types, and shadows flew away, the day having discovered their insufficiency in not reaching to the inside of the cup, to the cleansing of the conscience; and all elementary services were expired in and by Him that is the substance of all.
>
> And to this great and blessed end of the dispensation of the Son of God did the apostles testify, whom He had chosen and anointed by His spirit, to turn the Jews from their prejudice and superstition, and the Gentiles from their vanity and idolatry to Christ's light and spirit that shined in them; that they might be quickened from the sins and trespasses in which they were dead to serve the living God in the newness of the spirit of life, and walk as children of the light and of the day, even the day of holiness... So that the light, spirit and grace that come by Christ and appear in man were that divine principle the apostles ministered from and turned people's minds unto...[35]

What the Quaker movement amounted to for Penn was the rediscovery of what the apostles had taught: the "divine principle" in man. Elsewhere Penn claimed that the "ancient, first, and standing testimony" of the Quakers was "that God, through Christ, hath placed a principle in every man to inform him of his duty, and to enable him to do it."[36] Once the eschatological perspective of the imminent coming of the new age had vanished, this was the kind of belief that remained for the Quakers. The inward work and revelation of Christ was, in the early days, a microcosmic version of his work throughout all creation. Once a belief in the approaching restoration of the cosmos had vanished the work of Christ in the heart was all that remained. This is discussed more fully in the

following section.

Christ the Light.

Chapter 1 above attempted to place the light firmly in the context of the early Quakers' eschatological framework. The light was a way of speaking of the eschatological presence of Christ revealing and judging sin, purging and restoring the soul to perfection. The following quotation shows one early Quaker writer describing the work of the light in the context of the approaching day of the Lord:

> Prepare, prepare to meet the Lord, O Nations, Tongues and people unto you all, hereby a warning is come, and a visitation from the presence of the living God, which you are straightly required to put into practice, as at the terrible day of dreadful vengeance, you will answer the contrary... My faithful witness, the light in your conscience, which hath been eye witness of your villainy against me, shall testify against you... To the light in your consciences I speak, which Christ hath lightened you withal; which shines in darkness, and you cannot it comprehend, nor in it believe, but at it stumbles, and by it shall be broken; which if you loved it, it would teach you in the Spirit of the living God to worship... the light is given you from Christ Jesus, unto life eternal, or unto condemnation everlasting.[37]

The light here is in the context of the "visitation from the presence of the living God" and the imminent "terrible day of dreadful judgment". If this context is removed, then the light appears in a different guise. What remains is the light as a witness in the conscience, (put there by Christ), which condemns sinful acts, and if heeded, leads into the worship of God in spirit. This change marks a movement from viewing the light primarily as Christ revealed in the heart to the tendency to view it as a divine principle. Once one image amongst many, the light became the dominant metaphor for the Quaker experience, to the extent that Quakerism is now popularly regarded as a religion of mystical "inner light". This certainly cannot be said of the earliest form of Quakerism. Lewis Benson comments on this

development in Quaker thought:

> I have not found in Fox's writings a "concept of Inner Light" or even the words "Inner Light" as a term that is associated with such a formal concept. The Inner Light became a central concern of the "apologists" (Penn, Penington, Barclay) who in expounding and defending Quaker beliefs were trying to answer the question: What is it that is most central and distinctive about the Quaker faith? These early Quaker apologists opened a gateway to a path of speculation that caused some bolder spirits in later centuries to erect a doctrinal structure with the "concept of Inner Light" as the chief cornerstone.[87]

This is surely correct; for once the early eschatological vision had faded, the doctrine of the light *was* the most "central and distinctive" aspect of Quaker thought.

The Quakers spoke and wrote about the light from the earliest days of the movement, and this has given rise to the belief that there was a continuity in their beliefs throughout the Seventeenth and Eighteenth centuries. This is to overlook the importance of their eschatology, however. Later Quakers emphasised the pre-existent and universal nature of the light, and though it may be demonstrated that the first Quakers also believed the light to be pre-existent and universal, this was not the starting point of their thought. Rather it was a corollary of their belief that the light was Christ, and Christ was all-powerful, and filled all things. When they declared that the light lightened every man that cometh into the world, the first Quaker prophets were exhorting their hearers to repent, for the day of the Lord was at hand and God was saying "the light in your conscience... shall testify against you, and shall accuse you guilty of everlasting torment except you repent."[88] The emphasis on the universal work of the light was to show that none could escape the coming judgment, and that salvation was open to all who responded, not simply to the predestined

elect. The focus was on the present and the imminent future and the expectation of the breaking in of the kingdom, not on the work of the light in all ages.

Another mark of the shifting of the early Quakers' understanding of Christ was the increasing tendency to view the light impersonally. One scholar attributes this to what he sees as the "defective thoughts of personality" common in the Seventeenth Century:

> They could not conceive that one "person" could overlap or interpenetrate with another; and hence that which they felt stirring in them, purifying and enlightening and guiding, they were obliged to speak of as a thing or principle rather than a Person. "*That* of God in you" was what they would direct their hearers to.[40]

The earliest Quakers did, however, speak of the work of Christ in the heart in personal terms: he was the guide, prophet, teacher, husband and bridegroom of the soul. The tendency to view the light as a divine principle is more likely to have developed from the early Quakers' stress on the *activity* of the Christ in the heart, rather than his person. Knowledge of Christ's work without the living experience of it was an empty profession. "If I cannot witness Christ nearer than Jerusalem, I shall have no benefit by him", wrote James Nayler.[41] It was Christ active in the heart to reveal sin, purge it away and lead men and women back to God again that lay at the heart of early Quaker experience. It is not hard to see how, when the early eschatological framework was abandoned, Penn arrived at this definition of the heart of Quaker doctrine:

> This principle... gives man:
> First, the knowledge of God and of himself, and therein a sight of his duty and disobedience to it.
> Secondly, it begets a true sense and sorrow for sin in those that seriously regard the convictions of it.
> Thirdly, it enables them to forsake sin, and sanctifies from it.
> Fourthly, it applies God's mercies in Christ for the forgiveness of sins that are past unto justification, upon such sincere

repentance and obedience.

Fifthly, it gives to the faithful perseverance unto a perfect man, and the assurance of blessedness, world without end.[42]

One of the results of this kind of language was the gradual dissociation of the light from the person of Jesus. While the light was seen as the dramatic presence of Christ returned and returning, the early Quakers were able to make the closest possible connection between the light and the historical figure of Jesus. Once the light had become a divine principle, universal and pre-existent, sufficient to sanctify and save those responding to it in all ages and cultures irrespective of any outward knowledge of Christ or the Scriptures, the Quakers were left with increasing difficulty in assigning a meaningful soteriological function to the historical Jesus.

One possible cause of this dissociation may be found in William Penn's work, in particular in *Primitive Christianity Revived*, where Penn is at pains to demonstrate that the light and the Spirit are the same.[43] This equating of the light with the Spirit, rather than with Christ is an interesting development in what is a confused area of thought in early Quakerism. Although they frequently appear to have made little attempt to distinguish meaningfully between the Spirit and Christ, there was clearly a very real difference between what Penn meant by "the Spirit", and what the first Quakers understood by "Christ". In Penn's work there is an increasing tendency to speak of the Spirit (or light) in impersonal terms as a "principle", and this has little in common with the earlier experience of Christ within speaking and teaching as prophet, head and husband, etc.

Changing Attitude towards the Scriptures

The early Quakers' understanding of the message and role of the Scriptures was intimately bound up with their understanding of the work of Christ. Christ's work was the key to interpreting the Bible; consequently any change in the way the Quakers thought about Christ inevitably resulted in an altered understanding of the Scriptures. In the early days of the movement the Quakers' outlook was governed by the belief that Christ had appeared again and was experienced in the heart in his glorious spiritual Second Coming, and that the restoration of all things was at hand. It was to this glorious consummation that the Scriptures pointed. This eschatological dimension disappeared, as we have seen, giving way to an understanding of the Quaker experience in terms of the light, which was increasingly being seen as a divine principle placed in "every man to inform him of his duty, and to enable him to do it."[44] The stress on the present and near future faded as belief in the time of the dawning new age dwindled. Instead, the shining of the light in all people, ages and places became the focus for Scriptural interpretation.

William Penn was in many respects a transitional figure in early Quakerism, reappraising the thoughts of the first Quaker prophets and paving the way for the Quietist attitude of eighteenth-century Quakerism. We have seen that he viewed the importance of the Quaker movement in terms of a restoration of "primitive Christianity"; the rediscovery of true spiritual worship mediated by the light. In his *Primitive Christianity Revived* Penn goes to great lengths to convince his opponents that the light and the Spirit are the same, and to demonstrate there was a "difference in manifestation, or operation, *but*

not in principle" (my italics) between the Old and New Covenants. The contrast between Penn's writing (in style as well as content) and that of the first Quakers is immediately apparent. All language of disruption and the breaking in of the new age is gone. Instead, the continuity of the light is stressed. "Let there be light, and there was light, said God in the beginning of the old world; so there is first light in the beginning of the new creation of God in man," wrote Penn. The work of the light is the beginning and the end of the message of the Scriptures; and, Penn notes, "it is as often mentioned in the writings of the Old as New Testament; which every reader may see if he will but please to look into his Scripture concordance."[45] The difference lay in degree:

> For though it was not another light or Spirit than that which he had given to man in former ages, yet it was another and greater measure; and that is the privilege of the gospel above former dispensations. What before shined but dimly shines since with great glory... It was under the law but as a dew or small rain, but under the gospel it may be said to be poured out upon all men... the manifestation of the light and Spirit of God since the coming of Christ [did] excel that of the foregoing dispensations; yet ever sufficient to salvation to all those that walked in it.[46]

Any sense of the imminent end of all things is absent from this tract. Penn clearly did not interpret the Quaker movement as a sign that God was acting finally and decisively in history; nor does he appear to view the incarnation and cross in that way. The life and death of Jesus are seen as the clearest manifestation of the light, but their role is rendered less significant by Penn's insistence that the light was "ever sufficient to salvation to all those that walked in it."

Revelation and the Scriptures.

One area in which the early Quakers' changing attitude to the

Scriptures may be seen is in their understanding of the connections between revelation and the Scriptures. From the beginning they had believed that true knowledge of God could not be obtained from the "letter" of Scripture alone, without an experience of it in the heart. The Scriptures did not mediate knowledge of Christ; rather it was the other way around: Christ mediated a true understanding of the message of the Scriptures, since it was in him that the Scriptures found their meaning and fulfilment. Where Christ was truly known, the message of the Scriptures was received and understood; indeed, it became the framework which controlled the early Quakers' understanding of conversion. The five ministrations (from Adam to Moses, the Law, the Prophets, John the Baptist and Christ) were revealed and fulfilled in the heart. In the first ministration "death reigned" and the fallen sinfulness of the heart was revealed. Then the Law was revealed to condemn sin, and reveal human inability to fulfil its demands. In this hopeless state the message of the prophets was heard pointing to Christ. The soul then waited till the ministration of John, who prepared the way of the Lord, making the rough places smooth, and levelling the mountains of sin in the heart. Then Christ himself appeared, judging sin and purging it away, destroying the beast and the great whore and the man of sin in the heart, until the soul was fully restored and became a new creation, free from sin. One writer was able to point to specific years in which he believed certain Scriptures were fulfilled in him[47] Another spoke of Christ

> Who is the Son of God, and was before the world was, but manifest in time, and born of a virgin, and called out of Egypt, made under the Law, who led me through the Law, and is the end of it, in whom it is fulfilled.
>
> Thus was I led through the world to the end of it; for no more I

live, but Christ liveth in me.[45]

The early Quakers, then, stood at the end of the world. They believed that the whole of the Scriptures, including the book of Revelation, had been revealed and fulfilled in them. They awaited only the imminent final consummation throughout the whole creation. This was the work of the light (Christ). It began with a revelation of sin, and ended with the state of sinless perfection.

One corollary of the Quakers' position that the message of the Scriptures was revealed and fulfilled immediately by Christ in the heart, was the belief that Christ could perform this saving work independently of any outward knowledge of the Scriptures. Richard Hubberthorne (quoted more fully above, 92), declared that "those heathens in America which love the light of Christ and walk in it, although they have not the Scriptures, doth know more of Christ, his life, death, intercession and teaching, than those heathens in England, which have the Scriptures of these things, yet hate and despise the light."[46] Hubberthorne was driven to this statement in the heat of controversy. The main thrust of this kind of point in the early days of the movement was that the light had shined on all, and all alike were without excuse if they had rejected the light and continued in sin, whether they had the Scriptures or not. The light was closely linked with the coming judgment and the need for perfection:

> The light will witness that your condemnation is just, and you shall be forced to acknowledge, that God is righteous, when he rewards you according to your works: Therefore repent and turn to the Lord while you have time... I do stand a witness against all you that make a profession of God, and of Christ... and yet say that not any can be made free from sin, whilst they are in this life; and do yourselves live in sin... and in this state some of you that make a profession of Christ are found, putting the day of the Lord far off; and you I warn to awake, and sin not; for the judge stands before the door, and the wages of sin is death. He that hath an ear to hear, let him

hear.[50]

With the early Quakers' loss of their eschatological vision came a very different understanding of revelation and its relationship to the Scriptures. They lost any real sense that the final eschatological battle was being fought on earth before the restoration of all things, and consequently had no compelling belief that the message of the book of Revelation was being fulfilled in their hearts. The restoration signified the restoration of spiritual inward worship in the true church after the apostasy. The content of the revelation of the light was altered substantially by the disappearance of the earlier eschatological dimension. In the first place, it stopped short of leading the soul "through the gates of the city into the New Jerusalem" or "through the world to the end of it",[51] but more significantly, the whole understanding of revelation in terms of a present fulfilment of the Scriptures in the heart began to disintegrate. As the delay of the consummation sapped the strength of an eschatological interpretation of the Scriptures, an understanding of revelation as consisting of true knowledge of God and spiritual worship began to gain ascendancy. This may be seen both in the work of Penn (particularly in his later writings) and also in Barclay's *Apology*. It was at this point that the revelation of the light and the testimony of the Scriptures began to drift apart in Quaker thought. Penn's summary of the work of the light (revealing knowledge of God, convicting of sin, giving power to obey, applying the mercies of Christ, and leading to perfection)[52] has points of contact with the earlier view of the inner revelation of the five dispensations, but it is not rooted in the Scriptural accounts of salvation history. Barclay stressed the necessity of "divine

revelations" for a true knowledge of God, and consequently, salvation.

"We do distinguish," he wrote,

> betwixt the certain knowledge of God, and the uncertain, betwixt the spiritual knowledge and the literal, the saving heart-knowledge and soaring airy head-knowledge. The last we confess may be divers obtained, but the first by no other way, then the inward immediate manifestation of God's Spirit, shining in and upon the heart, in lightening and opening the understanding.[53]

The connection between such "immediate manifestations of God's Spirit" and the Scriptures was a negative rather than a positive one, in that "these divine inward revelations... neither do nor can ever contradict the outward testimony of the Scriptures."[54]

The drifting apart of inner revelation and the Scriptural accounts was further assisted by the tendency of later writers to treat the possibility of salvation without outward knowledge of the Bible as a starting point in their theology. Rather than being corollary of the activity of the light in the context of impending judgment, it became a presupposition about the nature of the light's soteriological function (i.e. the revelation of saving knowledge to the obedient heart). In the face of a growing understanding of the light as divine, universal and saving, (c.f. Barclay's sixth proposition, "Concerning the universal redemption by Christ, and also the saving and spiritual light, wherewith every man is enlightened", in *Apology*, the role of the Scriptures became increasingly difficult to describe. Barclay stated that

> God, in and by this light and seed, invites, calls, exhorts and strives with every man, in order to save them; which as it is received and not resisted, works the salvation of all, even of those who are ignorant of the death and sufferings of Christ, and of Adam's fall.

This saving work was achieved in the following way:

> by bringing them to a sense of their own misery, and to be sharers in the sufferings of Christ inwardly, and by making them partakers of his resurrection, in becoming holy, pure and righteous, and

> recovered of their sins; by which also are saved they that have the knowledge of Christ outwardly, in that it opens their understanding, rightly to use and apply the things delivered in the Scriptures, and to receive the saving use of them.[55]

The role of the Scriptures here is by no means obvious, and this is primarily because Barclay lacks the earlier Quaker understanding of the eschatological presence of Christ as the key to interpreting the Scriptures. For the first Quakers, where Christ was felt and obeyed in the heart the types, shadows and prophecies of the Scriptures were known to be fulfilled in and by him. The revelation of Christ and the testimony of the Scriptures were inseparably woven together in the experience of the earliest Quakers. This was not so for Barclay and other later Quakers, who had lost the conviction that the end of all things was at hand. Barclay maintained the position that the Scriptures proceeded from "revelations of the Spirit of God to the Saints", but his description of their place is far removed from the earlier dynamic sense of the fulfilment of the Scriptures in the heart. The Scriptures provided:

> 1. A faithful historical account of the actings of God's people in divers ages, with many remarkable providences attending them.
> 2. A prophetical account of several things, whereof some are already past, and some yet to come.
> 3. A full and ample account of all the chief principles of the doctrine of Christ...[56]

Another important development in the Quakers' concept of revelation was the emergence of the idea of "right reason" as bearing witness to the light. This is particularly significant since reason and the testimony of the Scriptures were frequently put together as twin secondary guides to the truth, in that they both testified to the light, and were not contradicted by it. This may be seen in Penn's writings: for not only did the Scriptures "give an ample witness" to the work of

the light, but "the reasonableness of it in itself" should convince people of its truth.[57] Barclay made similar assertions:

> This divine revelation and inward illumination is that, which is evident and clear of itself, forcing by its own evidence and clearness the well-disposed understanding to assent, irresistibly moving the same thereunto, even as the common principles of natural truths move and incline the mind to natural assent.[58]

The relationship between revelation, the Scriptures and reason is made clear in the following passage:

> these divine inward revelations... neither do nor can ever contradict the outward testimony of the Scriptures, or right and sound reason; yet from hence it will not follow, that these divine revelations are to be subjected to the examination, either of the outward testimony of the Scriptures, or of the natural reason of man, as to a more noble or certain rule or touchstone.[59]

This placing together of the "outward testimony of the Scriptures" and the "natural reason of man" had serious implications. The denigration of human wisdom was never far below the surface of seventeenth-century Quakerism, and although Barclay speaks of "the well-disposed understanding" and "right or sound reason" other comments about "soaring airy head-knowledge" must be taken into account.[60] When the Scriptures and human reason were placed in the same category an unconscious disparagement of the Scriptures became almost inevitable. Depreciation of the "dead letter" was common in Quakerism from the early days, but this was controlled by the belief that the Scriptures had to be revealed in the heart by Christ the living Word.[61] By the time Barclay was writing this belief had disappeared, and it is hard to escape the impression that despite the "excellency and certainty" of the Scriptures, they were nonetheless showing a tendency towards becoming superfluous in Barclay's system of thought.

Biblical Interpretation

This change in the Quaker understanding of revelation resulted in a different approach to biblical interpretation. In the previous chapter three early Quaker interpretative methods were described -- typology, allegory and prophecy (above, 98-104). These were all governed by the early Quaker eschatological outlook, in that they all referred not only to Christ's fulfilment of types, shadows and prophecies in his earthly life and death, but also to his fulfilment of them in the present in the Quaker movement. Their revelations were thus rooted in history, in a particular time and place. The everlasting Gospel was being revealed again in seventeenth-century England, and would shortly be proclaimed throughout the whole world. The Day of the Lord was at hand, and all were called to the judgment seat of God.

By contrast, the Quakers' approach to the Scriptures after the disappearance of the eschatological hopes was governed increasingly by ahistorical concerns; with the timeless ethical teaching of the light, and true spiritual religion. The first Quakers were prevented from treating typology and allegory merely as ways of parallels for their own experience in the Scriptures by the dramatic sense that Christ was known in the heart, fulfilling the types of the Old Covenant, and bringing people to the point where they were forced to exclaim "I, I, I, it is I myself that have been the Ishmael, and the Esau."[62] This may be contrasted with the following extract from William Penn's *Primitive Christianity Revived*:

> There are divers ways of speaking they [the Quakers] have been led to use, by which they declare and express what this principle is, ... they call it the light of Christ within man, or light within, which is their ancient and most general and familiar phrase, also the manifestation or appearance of Christ, the witness of God, the seed of God, the seed of the kingdom, wisdom, the word in the heart,

> the grace that appears to all men, the spirit given to every man to profit with, the truth in the inward parts, the spiritual leaven that leavens the whole lump of man -- which are many of them *figurative expressions* [my italics], but all of them such as the Holy Ghost hath used...[63]

There is no sense here of Christ fulfilling the Scriptures within, or of exercising his various offices (e.g. prophet, captain, priest) in the heart of the believer. Instead there are "divers ways of speaking" about the one divine principle. Without the early eschatological dimension, the experience of Christ was not specific to the present, to the fulfilment of the Old Covenant in the Quaker movement of seventeenth-century England; for the "principle" had lightened all people in all ages alike, revealing the timeless truths of true spiritual religion to those willing to receive them.

This principle, as we have seen, displaced the belief in the work of Christ in the time of eschatological fulfilment as the focus for biblical interpretation, and this resulted in an increasing concentration on the Johannine material of the New Testament, in particular on the logos of the prologue of John's Gospel. John 1:9 ("That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world") became the lens through which the whole of Scripture was viewed.[64] The light was seen to have been at work throughout the course of salvation history, for whether under the law and prophets, in the time of Christ or in the apostasy, the light "was the light of men". This belief predisposed later Quakers unconsciously to reject as a description of their own experience any biblical material which spoke of the final crisis of history and the breaking in of the new age. These included the apocalyptic material of both Testaments, certain passages of the prophets (especially Isaiah) which spoke of the restoration of

Israel and the new age, Hebrews 12:22-29, and Pauline material concerning the new creation in Christ. Where use of this kind of text persisted, it tended to be used increasingly as a loose analogy for the experience of the believer without any pressing sense that the Scriptures were in the very process of being revealed. The contrast between these two approaches may be illustrated by extracts from Penn's *Rise and Progress of the Quakers*, and Dewsbury's *Discovery*. Both writers are discussing pacifism:

> Not fighting, but suffering, is another testimony peculiar to this people: they affirm that Christianity teacheth people to beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning hooks, and to learn war no more, that so the wolf may lie down with the lamb, and the lion with the calf, and nothing that destroys be entertained in the hearts of people...
>
> Then my mind was turned within by the power of the Lord, to wait in his counsel the light in my conscience, to hear what the Lord would say; and the word of the Lord came unto me and said, put up thy sword into thy scabbard, if my kingdom were of this world, then would my children fight,... which word enlightened my heart, and I discovered the mystery of iniquity, and that the kingdom of Christ was within; and the enemies was within and spiritual, and weapons against them must be spiritual, the power of God; Then could I no longer fight with a carnal weapon against a carnal man; for the dead letter, which man in his carnal wisdom called the Gospel, had deceived me; but the Lord discovered to me the deceits of all these men in England, that were seeking the Kingdom of Heaven in outward observations; And the messenger of the Covenant, forth of his mouth proceeds the two-edged sword with which he slays his enemies, cut me down and caused me to yield in obedience, to put up my carnal sword into the scabbard, and to leave the army.[65]

Penn's calm assertion that pacifism is what "Christianity teacheth" provides a sharp contrast to Dewsbury's account of his traumatic experience of the "messenger of the covenant," who, he says "cut me down and caused me to yield in obedience." Penn's statement is in keeping with the growing belief that the light taught the timeless principles of true religion. Dewsbury's account of his dramatic conversion to a pacifist stance, on the other hand, is firmly rooted in his own

experience of the Civil war and of the revelation of the Scriptures in his heart.

The effects of the growing importance attached to the work of the light in all the various biblical dispensations was far-reaching. It had always been a strand of Quaker thought, but in the early days it was overshadowed by the concerns dictated by their eschatology. The belief that God had acted decisively in history in the earthly life and death of Jesus, and was now acting decisively and finally in the present, restrained speculation about the light as a divine, universal principle. The disappearance of this restraint propelled the Quaker movement along the path towards deism, in which the role of the Scriptures and that of the historical Jesus became increasingly problematic.[66]

Conclusion

The dual pressures of persecution from outside and disappointed eschatological hopes within brought about profound changes in Quakerism, both in organisational structure and in the nature of the beliefs held by its members. By the close of the Seventeenth Century Quakerism had developed from the radical enthusiastic movement of the 1650's into an established sect.

It is in the Quakers' attitude towards the world that these changes are seen most clearly. The belief in the imminent conversion of the nations to the Quaker message had dwindled away, and with it the idea that the world was in the process of being reconciled back to God by Christ. Instead it became something from which the believing community must be saved, and the Quakers developed a variety of means by

which they were able to protect and insulate themselves from its corrupting influences. An important example is the practice of endogamy. Those who "married out" were reproved, and, if they continued to be recalcitrant, disowned. Peculiarities of dress and speech, which had begun as challenges to the pride and vanity of the unregenerate, also became ways of underlining the separateness of the Quakers. The importance of the changing attitude towards dress in the development of a sectarian attitude was noted by Braithwaite. "At first the stress was laid on simplicity rather than uniformity," but extravagance in dress was evidence of a worldly spirit, and the different meetings sought to restrain this with increasingly detailed instructions and advice. "Zealous Friends," he wrote, "... [did not] perceive that every legalism that fenced in the Jew would bar out the proselyte, till Quakerism would become a self-contained, introspective sect, out of touch with the world that it should be conquering for the kingdom of God".[67]

The Quakers had come, by the close of the Seventeenth Century to view themselves not as the army of the Lamb marching upon the world, but rather as a small "remnant".[68] The vigorous evangelistic campaign was over, and the various dramatic prophetic "signs" and revivalist phenomena disappeared. This was noted by Richard Baxter:

> at first they did use to fall into tremblings, and sometimes vomitings, in their meetings, and pretended to be violently acted on by the Spirit; but now that is ceased... One while divers of them went naked through several chief towns as a prophetical act... But of late one William Penn is become their leader, and would reform the sect, and set up a kind of ministry among them.[69]

Part of the reason for this change was deliberate circumspection on the part of the Quakers. In 1672 the London Yearly Meeting warned Quakers in an epistle to

> Avoid all imagined, unseasonable and untimely prophesyings; which

> tend not only to stir up persecution, but also to the begetting airy and uncertain expectations, and to the amusing and affrighting simple people from receiving the Truth: for this practice, God's wisdom neither leads to, nor justifies.[70]

The concern for the survival of the group in a hostile world may be seen here, and the failure of the early eschatological hopes made this concern increasingly important as the years passed. One of the means of ensuring continuity was to look to the children of Quaker parents and to emphasise the importance of correct upbringing. The practice of accepting children of Friends as "birthright members" became an established practice. This, rather than conversion of outsiders, became the principal means of Quaker growth. It also meant that the group became increasingly inward-looking.

Quakerism, by the beginning of the Eighteenth Century, was equipped by its new organisational structure and its various insulating measures, to survive in a hostile world. The changes their doctrine underwent also helped ensure the group's continued existence. As we have seen, these changes were subtle and probably to a large extent unconscious. The redefinition of the central message of Quakerism as the work of the universal pre-existent light, rather than the appearance of Christ (the light) in the heart and the end of all things, meant that the Quakers never had to face squarely the failure of their early eschatological vision. They were able to claim that the doctrine of the light was their "ancient, first, and standing testimony. With this they began, and this they bore, and do bear to the world".[71]

Endnotes

[1]Fox, *Journal*, 261.

[2]Burrough, *Warning*, 12; Fox, *The Wrath of the Lamb*, (1658), in *Gospel truth Demonstrated*, 143-144, 144.

[3]Fox, *Journal*, 157. See also his *A Cry for Repentance unto the Inhabitants of London Chiefly*, (1656), in *Gospel Truth Demonstrated*, 73-76, and *To all the Magistrates in London*, (1657), in *Gospel Truth Demonstrated*, 105-6.

[4]Esther Biddle, *The Trumpet of the Lord Sounded Forth*, (London: no printer's name, 1662), 12.

[5]See Braithwaite, *Second Period of Quakerism*, 281-2, 284-5. The manuscripts (so numerous and detailed that Braithwaite comments that "the Recording Angel has no better kept documents on his shelves") were edited by Besse in *Sufferings*.

[6]Howgill, *Measuring Rod*, 19, 20.

[7]Burrough, *Warning*, 12. See also Dorothea Gotherson, *To all that are Unregenerated*, (1661), "oh consider how many overturnings there have been in few years, because people would not admit him [Christ] to reign whose right it is," 11. For a discussion of the social and political implications of early Quakerism, see Reay, *Quakers and the English Revolution*, 32. Reay sees Quakerism as "one of the forms which disillusionment took" after the "rising expectations which civil war had unleashed were frustrated." Indeed, he goes on to suggest, "after the defeat of the Levellers and Diggers and the downfall of the Rump and Barebones Parliaments the Quakers were the only group capable of representing the aspirations of the earlier years. Spiritual regeneration would ensure the political, social and religious millennium; this time there would be no compromise and duplicity", 32.

[8]Burrough, *Warning*, 12.

[9]Howgill, *Measuring Rod*, 23, 25.

[10]This idea may be found in various forms: "the Lord... hath now appeared in this the day of his power, and is appearing." Francis Howgill, *Some of the Mysteries of God's Kingdom*, (London: Thomas Simmons, 1658). Burrough applied the same "already/not yet" idea to the appearance of the true church: "therefore all people come out of your sects and false churches: for the woman [i.e. true church] is returned, and returning out of the wilderness; and the seed shall spring forth as in the days of old." Burrough, *Testimony Concerning the True Church*, 417. The biblical sources here probably include John 4:23, "the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth"; John 5:25, "the hour is coming and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God"; and Rev 6:2b, "and he went forth conquering and to conquer".

[11]Howgill, *Lamentation*, 32.

[12]See, for instance, Braithwaite, *Beginnings of Quakerism*, and *Second Period of Quakerism*; Reay, *Quakers and the English Revolution*; Arnold Lloyd, *Quaker Social History 1669-1738*, (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1950); John Punshon, *Portrait in Grey*, (London: Quaker Home Service, 1984).

[13]Braithwaite, *Second Period of Quakerism*, 218-9.

[14]Lloyd describes three epistles from 1653 in his *Quaker Social History*, Chap. 1, 1-16. Among other pieces of advice there is reference to spiritual overseers, the keeping of adequate records of births, deaths, marriages and sufferings, and to the disciplining of "disorderly walkers".

[15]Reay, *Quakers and the English Revolution*, 30.

[16]Ibid.. See particularly Chap. 5, "The Quakers and the Restoration of the Monarchy", 81-100.

[17]The laws of the Clarendon Code were intended to enforce conformity to the Church of England and consisted of: 1661 -- the Corporation Act, which compelled all holders of civic posts to conform to the Anglican Church; 1662 -- Act of Uniformity, which saw the ejection of some 2000 Puritan clergy who could not conform to the Book of Common Prayer; 1665 -- the Five Mile Act, which forbade nonconformist ministers from living or building chapels within five miles of a corporate town; and most significantly for the Quakers in 1662 and 1664 respectively, the Quaker Act and the Conventicle Act were passed, the first imposing penalties for opposition to oaths, and the second banning religious meetings of more than five people. This was supplemented in 1670 by the Second Conventicle Act, which made it an offence to speak at a conventicle, or to harbour one. (Source, Punshon, *Portrait in Grey*, 82).

[18]Fox, *Journal*, 511.

[19]Punshon, *Portrait in Grey*, 73.

[20]See, for instance, Lloyd, *Quaker Social History*, Chap. 2, "Individual Freedom and Group Authority", 17-31; Braithwaite, *The Second Period of Quakerism*, Chapters IX-XII, 251-350.

[21]See Bauman for a more detailed summary of the changes which had taken place within Quaker ministry:

> By the end of the 1670's the routinization of the prophetic ministry was fully confirmed. The process of emerging into ministry had become conventionalized; an element of traditional authority had taken hold in the form of accountability to experienced elders; silence and spoken expression had become formalized, with limitations imposed by corporate authority upon the range and tone of the ministerial message; the charismatic legitimacy of ministers had been tempered by the corporate legitimacy conferred by the issuance of certificates to acceptable ministers; the separation of the ministers from the body of Friends had been made manifest by the institution of the ministers' gallery.

Let Your Words be Few, 149.

[22]Braithwaite, *Second Period of Quakerism*, 391. See also Jones, *Later Periods of Quakerism*, 1, 59.

[23]Brinton, *Religious Philosophy of Quakerism*, 55-6, 58, xi; Gadt, "Women and Protestant Culture", 179.

[24]Smith, *New Creation*, 7.

[25]Fox, *Journal*, 27.

[26]Howgill, *Measuring Rod*, 23, 25.

[27]Penn, *A Brief Account of the Rise and Progress of the People Called Quakers*, (1694), in *Peace of Europe*, 169-228.

[28]Ibid., 170-179.

[29]Ibid., 179.

[30]*Primitive Christianity Revived in the Faith and Practice of the People called Quakers*, (1696), in *Peace of Europe*, 229-276.

[31]*Rise and Progress of the Quakers*, 171.

[32]Ibid., 184.

[33]Barclay, *Apology* ninth proposition, (n. p.). This may be contrasted with the reply given by Fox and Nayler when asked whether "the saints in this life without any addition hereafter, are perfectly just, perfectly holy, completely glorious?" Their response was:

> If thou know'st what a saint is, thou would'st know a saint's life, for they are passed through death to life; but thou art yet alive to sin, and dead to righteousness,., "the Lord is our righteousness" and he saith "Be ye holy as I am holy",., "Be not deceived, God will not be mocked, Thou hypocrite, dissemble not with him; he that is perfectly holy is perfectly just; where this is revealed, there needs no addition; for "the man of God is perfect",

Saul's Errand to Damascus, 255-6.

[34]Fox, *Clear Distinction*, 762.

[35]Penn, *Rise and Progress of the Quakers*, 172-3.

[36]Penn, *Primitive Christianity Revived*, 233.

[37]Burrough, *Trumpet*, 1, 5, 19.

[38]Benson, *What did Fox Teach about Christ?*, New Foundation Publications, no. 1, (London: Fox Fund, 1976), 10.

[39]Burrough, *Trumpet*, 5.

[40]Grubb, *Historic and Inward Christ*, 47.

[41]Fox and Nayler, *Saul's Errand to Damascus*, 261.

[43]Penn, *Primitive Christianity Revived*, 235. For a discussion of Penn's understanding of the light, see Endy, *Penn and Early Quakerism*, 105-7.

[43]Penn, *Primitive Christianity Revived*, Chapter V, 246-250.

[44]Ibid., 233.

[45]Ibid., 248. Another writer whose works may be regarded as marking the transition between early and Eighteenth Century Quakerism is Keith. See, for instance, his *Universal Free Grace*. His later defection from the Quaker ranks meant that his writings fell into disrepute. His influence on Barclay's *Apology* is noted by Braithwaite, *Second Period of Quakerism*, 387, 391-2.

[46]*Primitive Christianity Revived*, 249.

[47]Dewsbury, *Discovery*, 17-19.

[48]Whitehead, *Enmity Between the Two Seeds*, 11.

[49]Hubberthorne, *Light of Christ*, 20.

[50]Whitehead, *Enmity Between the Two seeds*, 15, 20-21.

[51]Dewsbury, *Discovery*, 19; Whitehead, *Enmity Between the Two Seeds*, 11. The first Quakers' belief that the Scriptural prophecies of the end times were being fulfilled in their midst was unshakeable. See Fox, *To the King of France*, (1660), in *Gospel Truth Demonstrated*, 189-193, 192-3; and Fell's *Call to the Universal Seed*: "the saints meets together, and sits together in the mount of holiness, and in the joy of the morning, when they neither touch one another, nor hurt one another in this holy mountain, but in everlasting peace, love and unity in the fellowship of the Gospel", 8. (C.f. Isaiah 11:9).

[52]Penn, *Primitive Christianity Revived*, 235.

[53]Barclay, *Apology*, 4.

[54]Ibid., Introduction, no p. n..

[55]Ibid., 84.

[56]Ibid., Introduction, no p. n..

[57]Penn, *Primitive Christianity Revived*, 235.

[58]Barclay, *Apology*, Introduction, 3rd Proposition, no p. n..

[59]Ibid., Introduction, 2nd. Proposition, no p. n..

[60]See also Barclay's claim that his *Apology* was written "more from my heart than from my head", (Introduction, "To the Friendly Reader", no p. n.), and also his understanding of the fall: [the Devil] "did puff

man up with a false knowledge of God, setting him on work to seek God the wrong way... Thus Christianity is become an art, acquired by human science and industry." 8. Another writer whose ambivalence about the value of education is evident was James Parnell, see *The Fruits of a Fast*, (1655), in *Several Writings*, 229-294: "I was sent into the schools of human learning, for to learn the human wisdom, for which end the schools are profitable; but for the attaining of heavenly wisdom and knowledge they are as far improfitable; and many books that are there read, are much for the corrupting of youth, and nourishing of the wild profane nature, which then ruled in me, and I was as wild as others, during the time I followed the school." 231. The early Quakers acknowledged that education was "profitable" in some respects, and set up schools to educate their children. See Braithwaite, *The Second Period of Quakerism*, 525-532.

[61]Fox was one of several writers who felt the need to emphasise that his revelations came to him immediately. "This I did not see by the help of man, nor by the letter, though they are written in the letter", *Journal*,. 34. It seems to me that Fox is making a point about the mode of revelation, not the content. What he *saw* was "written in the letter". For Fox the links between the Scriptures and revelation were much closer than a bare lack of contradiction between the two.

[62]Ibid., 30.

[63]Penn, *Primitive Christianity Revived*, 234.

[64]Brinton sees the influence of the Johannine material as paramount from the movements earliest days. See *The Religious Philosophy of Quakerism.*

[65]Penn, *The Rise and Progress of the Quakers*, 185; Dewsbury, *The Discovery...*, 16, 17. It is worth noting that the Quakers' stance on pacifism was by no means consistent and unambiguous in the first years of the movement. See Reay, *Quakers and the English Revolution*, 41-3.

[66]Endy is interesting in this connection. He states that when the early Quakers spoke of Christ and his work they were referring "not primarily to the Son born of Mary but to 'that which saves' in all ages and in all lands". This, I think, is a fair summary of what Penn believed, but it should not be projected onto the thoughts of the first Quaker prophets. Endy goes on to say that "when the Friends were accused of denying the efficacy of the historical Christ in favor of an eternal principle, they said there were not two Christs but only one and insisted on the continuity between the pre-incarnate, incarnate, and post-incarnate Christ." *Penn and Early Quakerism*, 275. This is certainly true, but arose out of the first Quakers' absolute conviction that the Christ they witnessed in their midst was none other than Jesus of Nazareth. It was not a resorting to what Endy describes as "ambiguity, inconsistency and camouflage to avoid becoming open targets for heresy-hunters." Ibid.. Lorena Jeanne Tinker also imposes later ideas on the earliest Quaker understanding of Christ: "If, as Fox and many Quakers including myself believe, Christ is indeed universal, then Christ is not just the male-delineated Messiah. Perhaps -- thrilling

idea -- across cultures and aeons, the universal Christ has appeared to faithful men and women in physical bodies of women as well as of men!" Response to Kuenning's "Christ's Wife", 38. Thrilling the idea may be; but it has no foundation in the writings of Fox. The suggestion that Christ might be incarnate again in another body was repugnant to the early Quakers, as may be seen in their denunciation of those who honoured Nayler as Christ. (For an account of Nayler's Fall see Braithwaite, *Beginnings of Quakerism*, 241-278.

[67]Braithwaite, *Second Period of Quakerism*, 516. The danger implicit in insisting upon uniformity of dress was seen by Fell, who made the following complaint:

> For it is now gone forty-seven years since we owned the Truth, and all things has gone well and peaceably, till now of late that this narrowness and strictness is entering in, that many cannot tell what to do or not to do...
>
> But Christ Jesus saith, That we must take no thought what we shall... put on; but bids us consider the lilies, how they grow in more royalty than Solomon, But contrary to this, we must not look at no colours, nor make anything that is changeable colours, as the hills are, nor sell them, nor wear them, But we must be all in one dress and one colour,
>
> This is a silly, poor gospel, It is more fit for us to be covered with God's eternal Spirit and clothed with his eternal light, which leads us and guides us into righteousness.

(Quoted in Braithwaite, *Second Period of Quakerism*, 518.)

[68]See Punshon, *Portrait in Grey*, 101. For further discussion on Quakerism and sectarianism see Elizabeth Isichei, "From Sect to Denomination among English Quakers", in Bryan R. Wilson, ed., *Patterns of Sectarianism*, (London: Heinemann, 1967), 161-181. See also Bauman's analysis of the changes within seventeenth-century Quakerism, *Let Your Words be Few*, especially Chapter 9, "Where is the Power that was at First? The Prophetic Ministry and the Routinization of Charisma", 137-153.

[69]Baxter, *Life and Times*, 91.

[70]Quoted in Bauman, *Let Your Words be Few*, 93. Melvin B. Endy detects a shift in Penn's thought towards a less confrontational approach to those outside Quakerism. See *Penn and Early Quakerism*, 144.

[71]Penn, *Primitive Christianity Revived*, 233.

PART II. WOMEN IN EARLY QUAKERISM

INTRODUCTION.

"The equality of men and women in spiritual privilege and responsibility has always been one of the glories of Quakerism."[1] With these words the Quaker historian William Braithwaite begins his description of the work of women in early Quakerism. His statement prompts several questions. To what extent were men and women genuinely equal in "spiritual privilege and responsibility"? Was this equality confined to spiritual matters, or did early Quaker women enjoy a measure of practical equality as well? What were the influences within Quaker thought that combined to make such equality possible? The aim of the second part of this thesis is to explore these questions, in particular the last one, and to suggest that different strands of early Quaker theology -- their views on the work of Christ, on the Creation and Fall, their attitude to Scripture and inspiration, their eschatology -- worked together to create an environment favourable to women, at least in spiritual terms.

This introductory section is intended to provide a context for discussion about women in early Quakerism. It would not be possible to attempt here a comprehensive picture of the life of seventeenth-century women. I have chosen, rather, to explore briefly certain aspects of the experience of women in the Seventeenth Century which have most direct bearing on the ideas introduced later in the thesis. For simplicity's sake these are grouped under two main headings: Women and Society, and Women and Religion; although in reality it is impossible to make a clear

separation, for the two subjects overlap and are intertwined in such a way as to make distinctions of this kind artificial.

The first section includes material on women and work, women and marriage, and female education and writing. The second section deals with the upsurge of female religious activity during the Civil War and Interregnum years, and seeks explanations for this in certain aspects of Puritanism. Although the extent to which the Quakers allowed women religious authority was unique, many starting-points and precedents for their religious experiments may be found in the life and thought of other groups and individuals in the Seventeenth Century.

Women and Society

The lives of women in the Seventeenth Century varied to such a great extent that it is not always helpful to treat them as a homogeneous group. Although women in general had little or no status under the law, small opportunity to acquire any but the most limited education, and narrow openings for self-expression in religious life, there is a marked difference between the lot of noble- and gentlewomen, and that of lower-class women. Seventeenth-century society was "highly stratified",[2] and although the male sex was generally regarded as superior to the female sex on rational, theological and physical grounds, a male farmhand was always inferior to the lady of the manor.[3] It may well be the case, as Keith Thomas suggests, that men of the lower classes were "more used to mixing with women on a basis of rough and ready equality",[4] because of their equally lowly status, lack of political power, education and self-determination in comparison with the wealthy. This is an important point, since it was largely from the

middle and lower classes that the Quakers drew their first adherents. Nevertheless, the lower class husband was regarded as head of the household and superior to his wife.

Women and Education

The Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries brought about many changes in attitude towards women and education. The first significant influence was the advent of Christian humanism in the Sixteenth Century with its emphasis on a classical education as a means of equipping men to be enlightened public leaders. It also stressed the desirability of educating women to be intelligent wives, companions and mothers. Several young women benefited from these ideals, and went on to become accomplished classical scholars and translators.[5] The influence of humanism did not, however, extend beyond the very wealthy and privileged:

> The majority of Tudor women lacked any academic training beyond elementary instruction in conversational English and in religious exercises. The accomplishments of women humanists and reformers took place against a backdrop of stark illiteracy for most of their female contemporaries.[6]

During the 1540's there was a marked growth in scholarly excellence among young women, but after this point training in Latin and Greek for women dwindled. The interest displayed by leading families in the humanist education of their daughters appears to have been influenced by hopes of achieving royal marriages for them.[7] Over two centuries later a woman scholar asked: "Since the days of Queen Elizabeth and Lady Jane Grey, whoever thought of teaching princesses Latin and Greek?"[8] In spite of the achievements of a small group of women, there remained in many people's mind grave doubts about the propriety of educating women

highly. Some felt that a woman's brain was not robust enough to survive the rigours of study. Others were concerned that women's chastity would be threatened by a broad education.[9]

Another important factor was the part played by Puritanism in the growth of female learning, although its role was an ambiguous one. With the spread of Protestantism, there was a growing emphasis on ordinary people reading the Scriptures in their own tongue, and consequently, basic reading skills became more important. While girls of high social class would have been educated at home, there is evidence to suggest that during the first half of the Seventeenth Century, middle class families were sending their daughters as well as their sons to elementary schools. Some Grammar schools appear to have admitted girls, and the first girls' public school was established in 1619.[10] However, with its suspicion of the humanist concentration on "Pagan" authors, and its upholding of the ideal of women as subservient housewives, Puritanism may at the same time be viewed as contributing to the decline of "the learned lady".[11] It encouraged a wider spread of basic reading and writing skills, whilst combining with other forces to ensure that women did not reach a high level of education. The educational gains of girls were greater at the lower levels of society during the late Sixteenth and early Seventeenth centuries, with the growth of charity schools, where they could learn a useful trade.[12]

The growth in literacy among women of the lower classes is significant for the role of women in Quakerism. Women who were able to read, or at any rate to memorise, portions of Scripture, had played important roles in the propagation of Lollardy in the previous century,[13] and in a similar way women in early Quakerism devoted much

energy to writing and publishing their message, and displayed a formidable knowledge of Scripture when opposed. Knowledge of, and ability to read, the Scriptures was the single most important advantage gained by Quaker women from the various changes in women's education in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth centuries. Many had moved in separatist circles before becoming Quakers, and would have been familiar with the radical religious ideas of the day. They were therefore well able to appropriate a new (and similar) system of religious thought, and bring to it their extensive knowledge of the Scriptures. There is abundant evidence in the form of prophetic tracts that these women were capable of formulating an argument, or articulating a vision or message from God which made coherent use (in terms of their religious understanding) of Scriptural material to expound the central ideas of Quakerism. This they did in significant numbers:

> Among those who took advantage of Cromwell's policy of religious toleration and the absence of censorship to preach, publish and admonish the government, were over three hundred women visionaries, of whom about two hundred and twenty were Quakers.[14]

For a woman to venture into print in the Seventeenth Century, however, was no light thing. Whilst men, more accustomed to moving in public spheres, might publish their ideas, women inhabited the private realm. For them to expose themselves to the public gaze through the medium of print could be viewed as an immodest act.[15] The scholarly works of some earlier women humanists were published, although this became less common. The dwindling of lady scholars in print, however, was mirrored in the Seventeenth Century by a steady increase in the number of middle-class women writers, and "this small stream of works by less privileged women burst into full spate with the abrogation in 1641

of the strictures imposed upon the press."[16] It is possible that men, regardless of social standing, had always felt entitled to print their opinions,[17] whereas women hesitated to do so. By the time Quaker women were printing and distributing their tracts, however, the practice had many precedents. Their writings must be seen in the context of their ministry. Once the practice of women's preaching was established and justified, there was nothing to hinder Quaker women from printing their message as well as speaking it. Preaching and writing were not two clearly defined and separate activities in early Quakerism. The personal and direct tone of early Quaker tracts, and their spontaneous style seem designed to create the impression of speech.[18] Both the writer and the speaker were little other than an obedient mouthpiece for the message that God had for a particular situation, group, or individual. The first band of Quaker missionaries spreading the Quaker message through England were known as the First *Publishers* of Truth.[19]

The Quaker movement benefited from the number of literate people it drew into its membership, who a century before might not have received any formal education. Their attitude towards education, however, remained ambivalent. Mere human knowledge could not lead to God, and might even act as a stumbling block to true knowledge. "Carnal wisdom will be consulting and leading you any way, rather than to wait on the pure light."[20] One of George Fox's earliest revelations was that "being bred at Oxford or Cambridge was not enough to fit and qualify men to be ministers of Christ",[21] This attitude struck a decisive blow for the uneducated, who were no longer barred from ministry by their lack of Latin and Greek, thereby removing one of the most important barriers to women's preaching.

Women and Work

The working lives of seventeenth-century women were varied and often arduous. Business women were found operating as merchants, brewers, ironmongers and as traders in a wide variety of goods. Sometimes they acted as their husbands' partners, sometimes independently, or as widows continuing their husband's trade. Women from the middle levels of society who were "housewives" were expected to take charge of the production of foodstuffs from orchards, dairies and gardens, and to look after the poultry. They had responsibility for feeding and clothing what might be a very large household, and organising and training the domestic servants.[22] Lower class women who were not hampered by the demands of motherhood worked as labourers alongside men, although they generally drew only half the wages of male labourers. Their tasks might involve sheep-shearing, thatching, harvesting and other work in the fields. This type of situation meant that husbands were financially dependent on the labour of their wives, and although Puritan marriage guides of the early Seventeenth Century stressed the woman's inferiority to the man (see below), there was no suggestion that women were too delicate for physical labour, or that it was somehow unfitting for a woman to be a competent business partner. With the growth of capitalism, however, it became more usual for a family to be supported by the labour of one bread-winner. Because women had by and large not received skilled training, and furthermore, were caught up in the demands of motherhood, the wage-earner was usually the man. This meant that by the Eighteenth Century there was only a small handful of careers open to the respectable woman.

Alice Clark suggests that the lot of the working woman worsened

considerably as the Seventeenth Century wore on:

> It is clear that the occupation of ladies with their husbands affairs was accepted as a matter of course throughout the earlier part of the century, and it is only after the Restoration that a change of fashion in this respect becomes evident.[23]

As men became less dependent on the financial contribution of their wives, the idea that women were "kept" by their husbands gained ground. "Henceforward," notes Clark, "the ideal of subjection of wives to their husbands could be pursued unhampered by the fear of the dangers resulting to the... husbands by the lessening of the wife's economic efficiency"[24]

These changes were taking place as the Quaker movement emerged in the 1650's. The amount of freedom granted to women to travel in the ministry must have been influenced in part by the kind of work they were accustomed to undertake in the household and the fields. The majority of support for Quaker ideas was drawn from the middle and lower-middle ranks of society,[25] where women had little time to cultivate ornamental activities. Women who were indispensable co-workers in family industry could easily be visualised as vital co-workers in the kingdom. Women as well as men faced harsh persecution, imprisonment, fines and seizure of goods until a large measure of toleration was granted in 1689. By the beginning of the Eighteenth Century, however, the Quaker minister William Edmondson was voicing the opinion that:

> There is harder labour in this work [the adorning of the Gospel of Christ Jesus], as travelling, journeys to publish the doctrine of the kingdom of Christ, often attended with hardships of divers sorts, and sufferings, perils and temptations, which the hardy temper, capacity and ability of men, is fitter to perform.

He admitted that certain exceptional women were fit to travel in the ministry, although the "easier part of the work doth in general belong

to the women."[26] This constituted a departure from earlier Quaker thought and practice,[27] for although Edmondson described men and women as "co-workers together with Christ" in the same way that other Quaker writers had done, the secular view of women's work had undergone changes. It became more natural to suggest that women should have "the easier part" in the Kingdom of God as well.

Marriage

The rise of Puritanism brought with it new attitudes to marriage. With the dissolution of convents in the Sixteenth Century, celibacy ceased to be a respectable alternative to marriage. The later narrowing of work opportunities for middle- and upper-class women meant that by the Eighteenth Century a well-bred woman who did not marry could only hope to remain dependent on her relatives, become a governess, or offer her services as a companion. Marriage became an all-important goal, and the education of girls was geared towards achieving this.

Many ideals of marriage which are usually regarded as especially "Puritan" -- e.g. companionship, choice of partner, freedom to follow the dictates of conscience -- have been shown to have precedents in pre-Reformation advice to the laity, for whom celibacy was not the ideal.[28] Other writers have assumed that Puritan ideals brought about a greater measure of equality in marriage for women, who were no longer regarded either as slaves, or simply as the means to having legitimate heirs.

However,

> the overwhelming preoccupation of the seventeenth century writers was with the relationship between husbands and wives, a relationship which subordinated the wife to the husband... The Puritan obsession with achieving male dominance argues against the theory of mutuality in marriage.[29]

The trend in the late-Sixteenth and first half of the Seventeenth Centuries was towards what Lawrence Stone calls a "reinforcement of patriarchy".[30] Both the state and the church influenced this development:

> The growth of patriarchy was deliberately encouraged by the new renaissance state on the traditional grounds that the subordination of the family to its head is analogous to, and also a direct contributory cause of, subordination of subjects to the sovereign.[31]

Protestantism placed new responsibility on heads of households for the spiritual welfare of servants and members of the family. "The family is a little church, and a little commonwealth", wrote William Gouge in 1622.[32] "Not only had the household replaced the parish, but the father had replaced the priest."[33]

The writers of early seventeenth-century conduct guides portrayed the husband as "a king in his own house" and as "God's immediate officer, and the king in his family".[34] Although they stress that the woman was "as the deputy subordinate" and admit that there was a "near equality" between husband and wife; yet "God having so expressly appointed subjection, it ought to be acknowledged."[35] William Whately demanded a thorough acknowledgement of subjection in his description of a wife's duty:

> The whole duty of the wife is referred to two heads. The first is, to acknowledge her inferiority: the next, to carry herself as inferior. First then the wife's judgment must be convinced, that she is not her husband's equal, yea, that her husband is her better by far; else there can be no contentment, either in her heart, or in her house. If she stands upon terms of equality, much more of being better than he is, the very root of good carriage is withered, and the fountain thereof dried up. Out of place, out of peace. And woe to these miserable aspiring shoulders, that content not themselves to take their room, next below the head. If ever thou purpose to be a good wife, and to live comfortably, set down this with thyself. *Mine husband is my superior, my better; he hath authority and rule over me...* If the wife do not learn this lesson perfectly, if she have it not without a book, even at her fingers' ends as we speak, if her very heart condescend not to it, there will be wrangling,

> repining, striving, vying to be equal with him, or above him; and thus their life will be but a battle, and a trying of masteries. A woeful thing.[36]

Families were to be held together by deference and obedience to superiors, in much the same way that society at large functioned at the time. Silence and respect was expected of young people and inferiors. At Oxford University, for instance, undergraduates were expected to doff their hats and give place to bachelors, bachelors to masters, and masters to doctors. It is not to be inferred that such a pattern was widely resented by people in the Seventeenth Century:

> Under conditions in which everyone knows and accepts his place, the deferential system provides a comfortable framework for all social relationships... They only cease to work harmoniously when the premises on which they are based come under challenge.[37]

Just such a challenge occurred when wives exercised their right to follow the dictates of their own conscience. This right was theoretically extended to all adults, but difficulties arose in the minds of Puritan writers when this right was balanced against the husband's authority over his wife -- the result was unresolved and contradictory advice. A sinful husband requiring his wife to attend mass or a stage play must be disobeyed, according to Gouge; yet on the next page he states that even a husband who is an enemy of Christ must be obeyed "because in his office [i.e. as husband] he is in Christ's stead, though in his heart an enemy. In this case will the wisdom, patience and obedience of a wife be best tried."[38]

Part of the motivation for this kind of ambiguous advice was the fear that freedom of conscience might lead to other kinds of freedom, and the gradual erosion of the husband's authority. When obedience to the human authority clashed with obedience to God, the theory, at any

rate, was clear: obey God. Gouge could assume that the majority of his readers would agree about the sinfulness of attending mass or the theatre, and counselling a wife to disobey her husband over such an issue would not be construed as threatening to the authority of godly men in general. Difficulties were to arise when clashes occurred over whether or not a wife should leave the established church to join a nonconformist assembly, as they did in considerable numbers during the Seventeenth Century. This was no longer a "negative" obedience to God by refusing to do something all Puritans regarded as sinful. Joining a nonconformist group was "positive" and active obedience to God, which had to be understood as a criticism of the established church, and of other Puritans remaining in it. This was particularly alarming, as the wife brought new beliefs and a new source of authority into the home to challenge her husband's beliefs and authority. It is small wonder, then, that the new sects and nonconformist assemblies were so violently attacked by conforming Christians. "The growth of the sects, it was asserted, was reducing the practice of household piety, alienating the affections of members of the family towards each other, and worst of all, rending the bonds of obedience which held them together."[39]

The movement of conforming Christians towards nonconformity was often made on grounds of conscience, or a sense of being called out of a compromised and impure church. Acknowledgement of freedom of conscience and the idea of obedience to God's call were the means through which nonconformity was able to grow, and therefore the ideal of male superiority -- although generally upheld by the nonconformist sects -- could be subordinated on occasion to higher ideals. More clearly than Whately and Gouge, the nonconformists undermined male authority in the

home by championing the rights of individual conscience:

> The radical dissenting sects were well aware of the importance of patriarchal power in the household as an obstacle to their proselytising mission. In 1666 John Bunyan denounced 'mad-brained blasphemous husbands that are against the godly and chaste conversation of their wives; also you that hold your servants so hard to it that you will not spare them time to hear the Word.' He was driven by his frustrations to demand a relaxation of household patriarchy as a means of exposing women, children and servants to his preaching.[40]

Rather than excusing a woman's failing if her conduct was a result of obedience to a reprobate husband, the sects condemned such a weakness:

> In 1658 Jane Adams excused her absence from the Baptist meeting at Fenstanton by explaining that her husband would not let her come. She was sharply reminded that there were limits to the authority a husband could exercise and that she must come unless restrained by force.[41]

Not only did the nonconformist sects limit the amount of obedience due to a husband; they also threatened male supremacy by implying that a woman might be capable of higher spiritual insights than her husband, and able to act independently of him in spiritual matters. Gouge and Whately tentatively allowed these theories as well, but stressed the wife's submission above all else, although there is internal evidence in the conduct guides themselves to suggest that this ideal, for various reasons, remained unattainable.[42] A large number of early Quakers were converts from other branches of nonconformity, in particular the groups known as Seekers, who had withdrawn from the church in order to wait together for a new revelation from God. Others were drawn from the General (Arminian) Baptist congregations. Many women, therefore, had already broken with the established church, and possibly already confronted their husband's authority in the process. A tradition of female independence in religious matters was established by

the mid-Seventeenth Century, and the Quakers were able to benefit from this.

Women and Religion

The Civil War years in England were a time of unprecedented religious experimentation. The breakdown of censorship of the press in 1641 gave scope for the spreading of innovative ideas, and a wealth of unorthodox tracts flooded the country. During this time, and until the Restoration of the monarchy in 1660, Christopher Hill suggests that "it may have been easier for eccentrics to get into print than ever before or since."[43] Groups which had previously met for worship illegally and in secret enjoyed new freedom as law and order deteriorated. Nonconformists who had been driven into exile in Holland returned, perhaps bringing with them new ideas about the position of women arising from their observation of "the greater freedom enjoyed by women among the Dutch."[44]

By 1641, petitions against "scandalous" ministers were being received, and it has been estimated that between two and two and a half thousand "unfit" ministers were ejected from their livings and replaced by ministers conforming to Puritan theology.[45] The tradition of "plebeian anti-clericalism and irreligion" had a long history,[46] and contempt of non-preaching clergy was widespread. What could not be foreseen by the Puritans, who termed such ministers as "dumb dogs", was that exactly the same abuse would be levelled at their clergy in turn by the more radical sects, in particular the Quakers. When the House of Commons decreed in 1641 that it was lawful for parishioners to set up a lecture and maintain an orthodox minister where there was no preaching,

many took advantage of this opportunity, including some Independents who felt able to conform to the Presbyterian Directory of Public Worship.

By 1643,

> Especially in London, a sort of dual system of religious organisation had developed. On the one hand there was the traditional parochial system, in which each locality had its church serving all who lived in a neighbourhood. To a great extent this official network was in Presbyterian hands. On the other, groups with common persuasions were forming gathered churches, whose members chose their own minister and might be drawn from a wide area on a voluntary basis.[47]

By 1645, Parliament found it necessary to pass a bill to silence any minister not licenced, but this was met with such widespread hostility that the law quickly became a dead letter.[48] The pulpit debate was a bitter one, with writers on the one hand defending the pulpit from from "Plough-Wright-Public-Preachers" and the like, or, on the other, protesting that Peter was a "catcher of fish by nets, and men by preaching... therefore trading and preaching is legitimate in the self same person."[49]

The religious innovations flourishing under the large measure of toleration extended during the Civil War Interregnum were greeted with horror by the Presbyterian establishment. Thomas Edwards' *Gangraena*, printed at various stages during 1646, catalogued the "Errours, Heresies, Blasphemies and Pernicious Practices" of the time. It was in this context that women first became noticeable as prophets and preachers, and Edwards included accounts of some of their activities.[50]

The evidence available to scholars suggests that women were numerically "extremely prominent" amongst the sects.[51] What was it that drew so many women out of the established church into Independency? Various explanations have been put forward. Contemporaries drew

attention to the greater measure of religious freedom offered to women by the sects, calling it a "mere politic invention to engage that sex to their party."[52] The privileges extended to women varied from group to group, and might include speaking at church meetings, preaching, or prophesying.[53] These may well have proved attractive to women confined to passive roles in the Presbyterian church; but there were tendencies within Puritanism that may well have paved the way for the increase in female religious activity. This is suggested by Claire Cross, who notes the part played by women in the establishing of some Civil War churches, and concludes that

> Godly women achieved so much influence in certain churches during the Civil War period not so much because of the revolutionary nature of the times as because the whole trend of puritan practice for at least the previous century had been preparing them for such action.[54]

In an earlier footnote Cross implies that the practice of earlier Puritanism was at odds with Puritan theory, in particular, Puritan marriage theory:

> The more the evidence becomes available about the behaviour of actual women in the early seventeenth century, the more it is possible to question the extent of the subjection of women in the 'typical' puritan household. The godly ministers seem to have been pursuing a mirage, far from reality.[55]

This may be inferred from the conduct guides themselves, the writers admitting that their advice is not "customable":

> Nay it is scarce thought seemly amongst many women, nay they care as little for their husbands as they for them; yea, they despise him; yea they have inverted this precept and cause their husbands to fear them. This impudency, this unwomanhood tracks the way to the harlot's house.[56]

Subjection of women was clearly not universally accepted;

> Contrary is the disposition of many wives, whom ambition hath tainted and corrupted within and without: they cannot endure to think of subjection: they imagine that they are made slaves

thereby.[57]

What caused the godly ministers to pursue their mirage of female submission so eagerly? Fear may have played a role here, for certain aspects of Puritanism -- the emphasis on the individual's spirituality and bible study, the growing importance of lay people with the idea of the priesthood of all believers, the equal depravity of all, and salvation irrespective of personal merit -- needed careful explanation if they were not to be converted into licence. The desire to make use of women's abilities and religious contributions had to be held in tension with the desire to preserve the family and social structures of which female subjection was an essential part. The inclusion of women martyrs in the Protestant martyrologies is a good example of this, and although Foxe and Bale would not have favoured women preachers and religious leaders, the example of women like Anne Askew could not be resisted. The martyrologists unwittingly provided women with a model of womanhood that differed from the pious, prudent and provident ideal. Askew is shown arguing and debating Scripture with her accusers and putting forward interpretations of her own in opposition to educated men. Women were tacitly assumed to be sufficiently important, and to pose a threat significant enough, to suffer for their beliefs.[58]

The Puritan emphasis on female subjection, then, may have been part of an exercise to check any too rigorous pursuing of Puritan thought to its logical extremes.[59] During the Civil War it became clear that such an attempt was doomed to failure. If all God's people were in a sense priests, why might not a layman preach God's Word as well as an ordained man? asked the Separatists. The issue did not end here, because "extending the right to preach to laymen raised the question of

whether or not women might preach".[60] Geoffrey Nuttall suggests that Quakerism indicates the direction of Puritanism,[61] and if this is the case, then Quakerism's recognition of women's right to preach the Gospel is a telling development.

Even if the Puritans had recognised the logic impelling the Quakers towards this position, there remained what for them was an insurmountable barrier to the practice of women's preaching: the Biblical injunctions against it. Unlike the more extreme Ranter movement, the Quakers did not dismiss Scripture as a "history, and a dead letter... a bundle of contradictions",[62] and felt themselves obliged to take its authority seriously. For them, however, the Spirit constituted a greater source of spiritual authority, as the Spirit was the source of the Scriptures; although the two were by no means to be set in opposition to each other. This led them to a point where they were able to formulate new interpretations of the Scriptures. Fox describes his realisation of this:

> For I saw in that Light and Spirit which was before Scripture was given forth, and which led the holy men of God to give them forth, that all must come to that Spirit, if they would know God, or Christ, or the Scriptures aright, which they that gave them forth were led and taught by.[63]

When Fox set up a system of women's meetings at a later date, he dealt with opposition by quoting Scriptural precedents, but characteristically ended with the comment "and if there was no Scripture for our men and women's meetings, Christ is sufficient".[64]

Conclusion

There were various factors, then, which combined to create an atmosphere in which the Quakers' radical ideas about women could take

root. Their dramatic religious experience coupled with their intense eschatological convictions brought these ideas to fruition. Nevertheless, the assertion that "the equality of men and women in spiritual privilege and responsibility has always been one of the glories of Quakerism" needs careful qualification.[65]

One impression which needs to be avoided is that there was a single Quaker position on the role of women, and that this was present in a highly developed form from the beginning of the movement. A detailed analysis of early Quaker writings reveals a gradual development of ideas concerning women's ministry. My impression is that women's preaching preceded any written advocation of the practice. Indeed, the earliest tracts appear to be justifications in the face of opposition from outside the group. By and large, these justifications consist of listing Biblical precedents for women's ministry, and Quaker reinterpretations of the different Biblical injunctions against women's speaking, some of them highly idiosyncratic. The more "theological" reasons for allowing women to minister (culminating in Fox's assertion that women and men were created in the image and power of God, and restored to that image by Christ) tend to appear at a later date. Fox reached this conviction in the course of his campaign to set up women's meetings during the 1670s. The following extract is a good example of the high point of Quaker thought on the subject of male and female in Christ:

> For man and woman were helpsmeet, in the image of God and righteousness and holiness, in the dominion before they fell; but after the fall, in the transgression, the man was to rule over his wife. But in the restoration by Christ into the image of God and his righteousness and holiness again, in that they are helpsmeet, man and woman, as they were before the fall.[66]

This was written by Fox in 1672, although the writer of one recent essay wrongly places it in 1653. This is unfortunate, since she goes on to say that "this ebullient rejection of the curse of Genesis was enthusiastically endorsed by women, most notably by Margaret Fell in 1666 in "Women's Speaking Justified."[57] Margaret Fell does not employ Fox's argument at all in this tract; rather her emphasis is on Christ, the seed of the woman, who bruises the serpent's head.

This kind of conflation of early Quaker material on the role of women obscures not only the development of ideas which took place during the second half of the Seventeenth Century; but also the fact that conflicting views of women and different interpretations of the Scriptures about women existed side by side in early Quakerism. Despite the freedom afforded from the earliest days to Quaker women to preach and prophesy, there lingered in the minds of many Quakers considerable hostility to the idea of female authority. Fox's plan to set up independent meetings for women met with aggressive opposition, and underlying the arguments of his opponents Fox believed he could detect covert mysogyny: "You do not deserve to have wives," he told one group, "you speak so much against women."[58]

While it is essential not to idealise the early Quakers' attitude towards women, it is important on the other hand not to underestimate their considerable contribution to the history of women and religion. To have arrived at the point where their beliefs about Christ's work had such extensive practical implications for women *on earth* was without parallel in Seventeenth Century England, and indeed, remains unmatched in some denominations today.

Endnotes

[1]Braithwaite, *Second Period of Quakerism*, 270.

[2]Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, 4.

[3]Unless, inconceivably, he were to marry her, in which case he automatically became her superior because of the superior office of husband.

[4]Keith Thomas, "Women and the Civil War Sects", ed. T. Aston, *Crisis in Europe 1560-1660*, (London: Essays from Past and Present, 1966), 317-340, 322.

[5]E.g., Thomas More's daughters, who learnt Latin, Greek, rhetoric, philosophy, theology, logic, mathematics and astronomy. The eldest, in particular, became an excellent classical scholar. Retha M. Warnicke, *Women of the English Renaissance and Reformation*, Contributions in Women's Studies, no. 38, (London: Greenwood Press, 1983), 23.

[6]Ibid., 3.

[7]Ibid., 83, 132.

[8]Elizabeth Carter, quoted in Lawrence Stone, *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England 1500-1800*, (London: Winfield and Nicolson, 1977), 356.

[9]E.g., John Winthrop, writing in New England in 1645 of a young women who had lost her wits through too much study: "had she attended her household affairs, and such things as belong to women, and not gone out of her way and calling to meddle in such things as are proper for men, whose minds are stronger, etc. she had kept her wits". Quoted in Lyle Koehler, "The Case of the American Jezebels: Anne Hutchinson and Female Agitation during the Years of the Antinomian Turmoil, 1636-1641", *William and Mary Quarterly* 31 (1974), 55-78, 58. This kind of belief lingered. In 1708 *The British Apollo* stated that women "are cast in too soft a mould, are made of too fine, too delicate a composure to endure the severity of study, the drudgery of contemplation, the fatigue of profound speculation." Quoted in Stone, *The Family*, 357.

[10]Suzanne W. Hull, *Chaste, Silent and Obedient. English Books for Women 1472-1640*, (Leniston/Queenston: Kingsport Press, 1982), 3; Rosemary Masek, "Women in an Age of Transition, 1458-1714", *The Women of England from Anglo-Saxon Times to the Present*, Barbara Kanner, ed., (London: Mansell, 1980), 138-182, 155.

[11]Stone, *The Family*, 203.

[12]Hilda L. Smith, *Reason's Disciples. Seventeenth Century English Feminists*, (London: University of Illinois Press, 1982), 22.

[13]Claire Cross, "'Great Reasoners in Scripture': The activities of Women Lollards 1380-1530", ed. Derek Baker, *Medieval Women*, Studies in

Church History Subsidia, (Oxford: Ecclesiastical Church History Society, Basil Blackwell, 1978), 359-380, 361, 371.

[14]Phyllis Mack, "Women as Prophets during the Civil War", *Feminist Studies* 8 (1982), 19-46, 24.

[15]This tension is explored by the seventeenth-century poet Elizabeth Carew:

> When to their husbands they themselves do bind,
> Do they not wholly give themselves away?
> Or give they but their body, not their mind,
> Reserving that, tho' best, for others prey?
> No, sure, their thought no more can be their own,
> And therefore should to none but one be known.
>
> Then she usurps upon another's right,
> That seeks to be by public language grac'd;
> And tho' her thoughts reflect with purest light
> Her mind, if not peculiar, is not chaste,
> For in a wife it is not worse to find
> A common body, than a common mind.

The World Split Open. Four Centuries of Women Poets in England and America 1552-1950, ed. and introduced by Louise Bernikow, preface by Muriel Rukeyser, (London: The Women's Press, 1979), 20. See also Anne Finch, Countess of Winchilsea:

> Alas! a woman that attempts the pen,
> Such a presumptuous creature is esteemed,
> The fault can by no virtue be redeemed.

Quoted in Katherine Usher Henderson and Barbara F. McManus, *Half Humankind. Contexts and Texts of the Controversy about Women in England 1540-1640*, (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1985), 23. One Quaker woman felt the need to stress that she was not motivated to write out of a desire for fame: "but in Christ Jesus my Lord and master, have I penned this matter... Neither have I fondly desired to get my name into print; for 'tis not an inky character can make a saint". Elizabeth Bathurst, *Truth's Vindication*, (no printer's name or place, 1679), introductory epistle, no p. n..

[16]Dorothy P. Ludlow, "'Arise and Be Doing': English 'Preaching' Women 1640-1660", (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Indiana, 1978), 33.

[17]Ibid..

[18]This may have been partly because tracts would have been read aloud to groups of people unable to read for themselves.

[19]See the title of Norman Penney's work: "The First Publishers of Truth", *Journal of Friends Historical Society*, supplements 1-5, (1907).

[20]Nayler, *Discovery*, 4.

[21]Fox, *Journal*, 7.

[22]See Alice Clark, *The Working Life of Women in the Seventeenth Century*, (London: Frank Cass, 1919), 50. For a description of the housework of Medieval women see Warnicke, *Women of the English Renaissance*, 6.

[23]Alice Clark, *Working Life of Women*, 38.

[24]Ibid., 302.

[25]For example, of the preachers in the "Valiant Sixty", thirty-four were closely connected with agriculture as yeomen, etc., eight were involved with trade, and eight were in professions of various kinds. Of the twelve women, only two are described as "gentlewomen". See Penney, *First Publishers of Truth*, 40.

[26]William Edmondson, *An Epistle Containing Wholesome Advice and Counsel to all Friends*, (London: no printer's name, 1701), 19.

[27]This will be discussed more fully below.

[28]Kathleen M. Davies, "The Sacred Condition of Equality - How Original were Puritan Doctrines of Marriage?" *Social History* 5, (May, 1977), 563-580, 564.

[29]Ibid., 566.

[30]Stone, *The Family*, title of Chap. 5.

[31]Ibid., 152. This political theory had lost popularity towards the end of the century with the publication of John Locke's *Two Treatises on Government*, and in 1706 Mary Astell was asking "If absolute sovereignty be not necessary in a state, how comes it to be so in the family? Or if in a family, why not in a state?... Is it not then partial in men to the last degree to contend for and practise that arbitrary dominion in their families which they abhor and exclaim against in the state?" Ibid., 240.

[32]William Gouge, *Of Domesticall Duties*, (London: 1622; facsimile reprint ed., The English Experience, no. 803 Norwood, New Jersey: Walter J. Johnson Inc., 1976), 18. For discussion of marriage guides, and literature for and about women in this period, see Hull, *Chaste, Silent and Obedient*, and Henderson and McManus, *Half Humankind*. Another useful source is *Women and the Literature of the Seventeenth Century. An Annotated Bibliography based on Wing's Short-Title Catalogue*, Hilda L. Smith and Susan Cardinale, eds., (London: Greenwood Press, 1990). For an introduction to Quaker literature relating to women, see Christine Trevett, ed., *Womens Speaking Justified and other seventeenth-century Quaker writings about women*, (London: Quaker Home Service, 1989).

[33]Stone, *The Family*, 155.

[34]William Gouge, quoted in Davies, "Sacred Condition of Equality", 566; William Whately, *A Bride-bush, or a Wedding Sermon*, (London: 1617; Facsimile reprint ed., The English Experience no. 769, Norwood, New Jersey: Walter J. Johnson, Inc., 1975), 16.

[35]Whately, ibid.; Gouge, *Domesticall Duties*, 423, 271.

[36]Whately, *Bride-Bush*, 36.

[37]Oxford University Statutes, 1636, quoted in Stone, *The Family*, 172; ibid., 173.

[38]Quoted in Davies, "Sacred Condition of Equality", 572.

[39]Thomas, "Women and the Civil War Sects", 333.

[40]Stone, *The Family*, 241. Bunyan was elsewhere quite clear about the position of women: "Doubtless the woman was, in her first creation made in subordination to her husband, and ought to have been under obedience to him: wherefore still that had remained a duty, had they never transgressed the commandment of God... Women therefore, whenever they would perk it or lord it over their husbands, ought to remember, that both by creation and transgression they are made to be in subjection to their own husbands." *Exposition of the First Ten Chapters of Genesis*, *Works*, vol. II, 413-502, 438.

[41]Thomas, "Women and the Civil War Sects", 333.

[42]See below.

[43]Christopher Hill, *The World Turned Upside Down. Radical Ideas During the English Revolution*, (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books Ltd., Peregrine Books, 1984), 17.

[44]Thomas, "Women and the Civil War Sects", 322.

[45]Robert Barclay, *The Inner Life of the Religious Societies of the Commonwealth*, (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1876), 133.

[46]Hill, *World Turned Upside Down*, 25.

[47]Morton, *World of the Ranters*, 145.

[48]Barclay, *Inner Life*, 147.

[49]Thomas Hall, *The Pulpit Guarded With XX Arguments*, extract reprinted in ed. Ann Hughes, *Seventeenth Century England. A Changing Culture. Vol. I, Primary Sources*, (London: Open University Press, 1980), 140; William Hartley, *The Prerogative Priest's Passing Bell*, extract reprinted in ed. Hughes, *Seventeenth Century England*, 141.

[50]Thomas Edwards, *Gangraena*, (London: printed in three parts during 1646). See Morton, *World of the Ranters*, 25, 28, 32, 41, 125, on women

in *Gangraena*. For further examples of women prophets and visionaries, see Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, 161-3.

[51]Thomas, "Women and the Civil War Sects", 320.

[52]Ibid., 322. Another scholar sees the equality offered to women in Quakerism as a significant factor in attracting "a number of women of unusual abilities", Katharine Moore, *She For God: Aspects of Women and Christianity*, (London: Allison and Busby, 1978), 122.

[53]For accounts of women's religious activity before and during the Civil War and Interregnum, see Richard L. Greaves, "Foundation Builders: the Role of Women in Early English Nonconformity", in Greaves, *Triumph over Silence*, chap. 3, 75-92. See also the *Bibliographical Dictionary of British Radicals in the Seventeenth Century*, 2 vols., Richard L. Greaves and Robert Zaller, eds., (Brighton: Harvester Press, 1982).

[54]Claire Cross, "'He-goats before the Flocks': A Note on the Part played by Women in the Founding of some Civil War Churches", *Popular Belief and Practice*, Studies in Church History, vol. 8, 195-202, 202.

[55]Ibid., footnote, 198.

[56]Whately, *Bride-bush*, 37.

[57]Gouge, *Domesticall Duties*, 267.

[58]Warnicke, *Women of the English Renaissance*, 75.

[59]That greater religious freedom and an improved view of women and marriage was implicit in Puritan ideas might explain why later scholars have assumed such an improvement took place.

[60]Richard L. Greaves, "The Ordination Controversy and the Spirit of Reform in Puritan England", *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 21 (1970), 225-241, 235.

[61]Nuttall, *Holy Spirit*, Foreword.

[62]Morton, *World of the Ranters*, 83.

[63]Fox, *Journal*, 33.

[64]George Fox, quoted in Nuttall, *Holy Spirit*, 89.

[65]As does the assertion that "a primary tenet of Quakerism was that the hierarchical character of gender relationships, indeed of all social relationships, was a product of human sinfulness, an outcome of the original Fall from grace". Phyllis Mack, "Gender and Spirituality in Early English Quakerism 1650-1665", in E. Potts Brown and S. Mosher Stuart, eds., *Witnesses for Change*, (New Brunswick and London: Rutgers University Press, 1989), 39.

[56]George Fox, *A Collection of Many Select and Christian Epistles*, (London: T. Sowle, 1698), vol. 2, 323.

[57]Mary Maples Dunn, "Latest Light on Women of Light", Part 2, the 18th Century, in Brown and Stuart, *Witnesses for Change*, 69-89, 72. Dunn's choice of the word "rejection" is not a happy one, suggesting as it does that Fox was simply dismissing the concept of the curse, rather that claiming that Christ had undone the work of the fall.

[58]William Mather, *A Novelty: or, a Government of Women, Distinct from Men*, (London: Sarah Howkins, 1694[?]), 10.

CHAPTER 4

THE WORK OF CHRIST AND EARLY QUAKER WOMEN

Introduction

The early Quaker understanding of the work of Christ was central to their view of the position of women in the movement. This chapter is an attempt to provide a more adequate explanation of the freedom allowed to women to minister than the simple statement that "George Fox's central idea of the 'inner Light', 'Divine Light', 'Light of Christ within', or 'that of God in every man', implies a spiritual equality of all people."[1]

For the early Quakers, Christ was all. This meant that the roles traditionally visualised as "male" were seen as coming to their true fulfilment in Christ. He was, for example, the spiritual head of his people, the true husband and bridegroom of both male and female in his church. He was the one speaker in and through his people, and all that were "unlearned of him", both men and women, were to remain in silence. Likewise, Christ was the teacher and prophet who was to be heard and obeyed in all things. He was not to be hindered in his work as the one mediator between God and his creation by any human or "outward" forms of mediation. The male priesthood of the Old Dispensation had been abolished. All this had been brought about by the life and atoning death of Christ through which he undid the effects of the fall. As women and men came to him, Christ led them by his light up to God again, to the state of perfection Adam had enjoyed before the fall, and to the higher state "in Christ" who would never fall.

It would be anachronistic to suggest that the early Quakers were

concerned with the equality of women and men, or the liberation of women from male domination. In fact, if the issue of women's preaching (and later, women's meetings) had not arisen, it is not certain that the question of the position of women would have been addressed at all. Women were the equals of men because of the sense in which all people were in the fall, estranged from God; and more importantly, because Christ had died for all, enlightened all, calling all people back to God, and giving them the power to overcome sin through him if they obeyed. Women and men alike were to be freed from the tyranny of the Devil and his works.

From the beginning of the Quaker movement, however, women were encountered as preachers; and as opposition to Quakerism gathered strength, justification for this practice became more articulate. In the early years, the early Quakers' explanations often consisted of biblical precedents for women's speaking, and some peculiarly Quaker pieces of exegesis of the New Testament passages restricting women's teaching and speaking. As time went by they began to root their defences more firmly in their understanding of Christ's work, and by the 1670's George Fox was articulating a very clear argument for women's ministry based on his understanding of the restoration of creation in Christ. This idea may have been in the background of other early Quaker writings on the subject; but the difficulties surrounding the use of the creation accounts of Genesis in an argument *against* female subordination, when the prevailing interpretation used them in its support, may well have delayed the development of this strand of thought.

Christ the Restorer

When the early Quakers wrote of the creation, the fall and the restoration in Christ it was usually in terms of Adam. God created man, man transgressed God's command and fell from his image and was driven out into the earth. Adam was taken as the representative of the human race, and on the whole, there was little mention of Eve. However, when the early Quakers did discuss Eve in creation, the fall and the restoration in Christ, there was a marked difference in their treatment of the biblical material from that of most other religious groups of their day. Quaker thought on this subject found its highest expression in the writings of George Fox. Fox came to hold that woman was created equally in the image of God with man, that subordination of woman to man was a consequence of the fall not a feature of the creation, and that since Christ restored women and men to pre-fall perfection in this life, there could be no restrictions placed on the ministry of regenerate women who were again equally in the image of God with men. A closer examination of their exegesis of the various New Testament passages concerning the place of women will be left to the following chapter.

"Helps Meet in the Image of God"
Women in Creation

The early Quakers' handling of the creation accounts shows their reluctance to add anything to the words of Scripture. There is very little by way of exposition or comment offered by them that does not come in the form of quotations from, or allusions to, other parts of the Bible. This is true of most of their early writings, but much may be learned by observing their methods of selection and tacit rejection of

material as they form an argument. A good example of this is their apparent preference for the description of the creation of man from the dust of the ground (Gen 2:7), which is taken from Gen 2:4b-25 (the Yahwist account), yet their comparative silence on the subject of Eve's creation from Adam's rib, found in the same account (Gen 2:21-25). Instead, when they wished to discuss the creation of woman, they tended to emphasise the creation of man and woman jointly in God's image, relying on Gen 1:1-2:4a (Priestly account): "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them," (Gen 1:27). Thus their doctrine of the creation of man and woman rested upon a conflation of Gen 2:7 and Gen 1:27. Edward Burrough's writings contain an example of this:

> Of the dust of the ground were you made, and into man was breathed the breath of life; from the living power that formed all things; and man was made a living soul... for male and female in the image of the creator created he them, without sin and evil.[2]

This does not imply that they rejected the account of Eve's creation out of Adam, for some writers occasionally made use of both accounts,[3] but their marked tendency to avoid discussion of Adam's prior creation is interesting. It suggests their unease with a verse which in the Seventeenth Century was a proof text for women's inferiority. George Fox's position by the 1670's was that "man and woman were helps meet in the image of God... before they fell",[4] These words reveal that Fox read Gen 2:18 in the light of Gen 1:27, apparently reasoning that if man and woman were both created in the image of God, then man must be a help meet for woman as well as woman for man. This interpretation of the creation account is startling in the context of Seventeenth Century theology. For most of Fox's contemporaries the creation of Eve out of

Adam, and the fact that she was described as a "help meet for him", implied her inferiority and subordination to him. This was certainly the view taken by John Bunyan in his exposition of the first ten chapters of Genesis:

> Doubtless the woman was, in her first creation, made in subordination to her husband, and ought to have been under obedience to him: wherefore still that had remained a duty, had they never transgressed the commandment of God; but observe, the duty is here again not only enjoined, and imposed, but as the fruit of the woman's sin; wherefore that duty that she might do as her natural right by creation she must now do as the fruits of her disobedience to God. Women, therefore, whenever they would perk it or lord it over their husbands, ought to remember, that both by creation and transgression they are made to be in subjection to their own husbands. This conclusion makes Paul himself: 'Let (saith he) the woman learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence; for Adam was first formed, then Eve; and Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived, was in the transgression.[5]

So strong was the tradition for this interpretation that the Quakers could hardly have referred to Eve's creation out of Adam's rib without seeming to adhere to the idea of female subordination as part of creation, rather than the fall. Their desire was to convince their opponents that the regenerate woman could preach by the inspiration of the Spirit, and therefore any allusions to the traditional view of women's inferiority were not helpful.

What was the image of God in which woman and man were created? We have already seen in Chapter 1 that the early Quakers viewed the image of God as the reflecting of God's attributes. "In the beginning God made all things good, so did he man, whom he made in his own image, and placed in him his own wisdom and power, whereby he was completely furnished with dominion, power, and authority over the works of God's hands."[6] When the early Quakers dealt with the creation of the human race in their writings, it was almost always in terms of Adam; but the

same ideas were taken up by Fox and applied to Eve as well:

> Adam and Eve, before they fell, [were] meet-helps in the image of God, and in the power of God, with which they were to subdue the earth.
>
> God placed man in a blessed habitation in the beginning... and blessed him, and made him perfect, and not only set him in dominion, but bid him have dominion, and keep dominion. God said to them "have dominion" he did not say to them "do thou have dominion without thy wife," but he said to *them* "have dominion", to *them* "be fruitful", etc... Here was a blessed concord and unity.[7]

When other early Quakers spoke of Adam as having power and authority it is possible that some never addressed the question of whether Eve shared equally in this reflection of God's attributes. Fox was not alone in believing she did, however:

> When God created man in his own image; in the image of God created he them, male and female; and God blessed them; and God said unto them, be fruitful and multiply: and God said, Behold, I have given you of every herb, etc., Gen 1. Here God joins them together in his own image, and makes no distinctions and differences as men do...[8]

The earliest writings of the Quakers create the impression that Eve was not viewed as being subordinate to Adam. References to Eve as "the weaker vessel" do occur, but the Quakers dealt with this in their own way. They did not conclude, as Bunyan did, that:

> Wicked women, such as Eve was now, if hearkened unto, are 'the snares of death' to their husbands; for because they are weaker built, and because the devil doth easily fasten with them than with men, therefore they are more prone to vanity and all misorders in the matters of God, than they; and so, if hearkened unto, more dangerous upon many accounts.[9]

The early Quakers were unable to reject the idea that women were "weaker vessels" since it was enshrined in the Scriptures, (1 Peter 3:7: "Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel"). What they did reject, however, was the suggestion that the woman's greater "weakness" in any way rendered her unfit for ministry in the New Covenant in

Christ. In fact the reverse was true, for weakness came to be seen by the early Quakers as a prerequisite for the true ministry in Christ: "[God] chooseth the weak things of this world, to confound the things which are mighty," wrote Richard Farnworth in 1654, "and the woman is counted the weaker vessel, but the Lord filling that vessel full of his wisdom, and ruling it by his Holy Spirit,... it is for the praise and glory of his grace."[10] Human wisdom, education and worldly status did not equip anyone as a minister of Christ; and so amongst the Quakers, the weak, the poor, and the women who were in Christ, were not barred from ministry. The ideal state for all believers was that in which "Christ is all, and the creature nothing,"[11] and the powerless and underprivileged paradoxically had the advantage over the powerful and privileged at this point, in theory, at least. The early Quaker attitude to "human learning" is a good example of this. Those without a university education -- and most of the first Quakers fell into this category -- had little to lose by accepting the position that "being bred at Oxford and Cambridge was not enough to fit and qualify men to be ministers of Christ."[12] Women's weakness was exploited as an advantage in defences of women's ministry:

> though they be weak, yet he is strong, and as he said to the Apostle, His grace is sufficient, and his strength is made manifest in weakness... And such hath the Lord chosen, even the weak things of the world, to confound the things which are mighty; and things which are despised, hath God chosen, to bring to naught things that are.[13]

> And though we be looked upon as the weaker vessels, yet strong and powerful is God, whose strength is made perfect in weakness, he can make us good and bold, and valiant soldiers of Jesus Christ... Our sufficiency is of him, and our armour, and strength is in him: and all the great strength that is in men, if they want this armour, they can do nothing for God... Our glorying is in him, who doth not, nor will not despise, nor contemn the weak.[14]

Earlier writers may have paved the way for Fox's clear expressions that in the creation women and men were to reflect God's glorious nature by jointly having power and dominion over all that God had made, and by sharing union with God. The Quakers admitted that the woman was weaker, but drew back, on the whole, from stating that she was any way inferior to man.[15] The created state was to change, however, when Adam and Eve fell from perfection and the image of God.

Women in the Fall

When the early Quakers described the fall it was usually -- as when they described the creation of the human race -- in terms of Adam. The majority of Quaker writings on the subject of the fall take Adam as the representative of the human race, laying the blame for the disobedience on his shoulders. References to Eve's role in the fall occur occasionally:

> Now the serpent being more subtle than any beast of the field which God had made, he began to exercise his subtlety, and to lay his temptations and snares unto the innocent and weak, and so began with the woman which was but a part of man.
>
> And of the fruit which was not good for food [the serpent] gave the woman to eat, and was conceived in the woman, and got power over the woman, and she did eat, and entered into him that was the power of death, and acted by his power and deceived the man so they both fell from God... First the woman was deceived, then the man.
>
> It is true, the serpent that was more subtle than any other beast of the field, came unto the woman, with his temptations, and with a lie; his subtlety discerning her to be more inclinable to hearken to him, when he said, If ye eat, your eyes shall be opened; and the woman saw that the fruit was good to make one wise; there the temptation got into her, and she did eat, and gave to her husband, and he did eat also, and so they were both tempted into the transgression and disobedience.
>
> [The serpent] gets an entrance in her, where he knew the most weakness lay (viz) in Eve; and through that fallen and perverted subtlety he tempting her, she became subject to him, though not willingly; for there were reasonings, and some resistings; for she

said, God hath said, we shall not eat thereof.[16]

The early Quakers accepted that Eve was tempted and disobeyed first, but appear not to have deduced from this any greater propensity to evil on the part of women in general. Three of the four extracts quoted above offer some kind of explanation for the fact that Eve was approached first by the serpent. The serpent began "to exercise his subtlety, and to lay his temptations and snares unto the innocent and weak"; the serpent subtly discerned Eve "to be more inclinable to hearken unto him"; the serpent got an entrance "where he knew the most weakness lay". It is interesting that these writers felt that an explanation was necessary, since the Genesis account merely states: "Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?" (Gen 3:1). However, the tradition for inferring a greater inclination to disobedience and wilful sin in women from this verse was strong in the Seventeenth Century, and these Quaker glosses may be an attempt to challenge the prevailing view. They appear to have fixed on Eve's weakness as a more acceptable explanation for the fact that she was tempted first. From this they demonstrated the "fallen and perverted subtlety" of the serpent in exploiting the "innocent and weak". Although Margaret Fell states that Eve was "more inclinable to hearken" to the serpent, she goes on to say "and so they were both tempted into the transgression and disobedience". There is nothing in early Quaker thought to suggest either that Eve was more culpable than Adam; or, on the other hand, that her greater weakness provided her with an excuse for disobedience.

A far more successful challenge to those wishing to draw

significance from the fact that Eve was tempted and fell first was the early Quakers' habit of finding equivalents in the New Covenant where women were first to be obedient or faithful. By the 1680s the following arguments were being put forward:

> Although the woman was first in the transgression which brought in death; yet was she made by the power of the Lord, to bring in him who is resurrection and life... So it may be said, As by woman came in the transgression and degeneration; so by woman also came in the reconciliation and restoration, to wit, Christ.
>
> When [Mary] asked for her Lord, in the resurrection of life and power he appeared to her... For as the woman fell first into transgression, so in the resurrection Christ first appeared unto her, and sent her to declare unto the men that he was risen.
>
> The woman indeed (namely, Eve) was first in the transgression; and so they were women that first preached the resurrection of Christ Jesus.
>
> [God] in His infinite goodness and wisdom found out a way to... restore fallen man again by a nobler and more excellent Adam, promised to be born of a woman; that as by means of a woman the evil one had prevailed upon man, by a woman also He should come into the world who would prevail against him and bruise his head, and deliver man from his power.[17]

Although the woman and the man sinned equally in disobeying God and listening to the voice of the serpent, and were both driven out of the garden "into the earth", having fallen from the image and power of God, the results of this loss were manifested differently. For Adam it meant toil and hardship in his labour to provide food, and for Eve it meant sorrow in childbirth, and having her husband rule over her. On the whole, however, the early Quakers had little to say about these things. They had much to say about the effects of the fall on the image of God, (see above, Chapter 1), but in the early days the only element of the curse which received a significant amount of attention was Gen 3:15: "And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his

heel." The early Quakers understood the "seed of the woman" to be Christ, and this was a popular way amongst them of referring to the work of Christ within overcoming sin and evil by "bruising the serpent's head".

This silence on the subject of the curse is a significant one. Margaret Fell dealt with the subject of the fall and the curse on at least two occasions without referring to Adam's ruling over his wife. On one of these it is easy to see why this is so. In *Women's Speaking Justified* Fell set about the task of demonstrating the propriety of women preaching the Gospel. She showed how Adam and Eve were created jointly in God's image and given dominion over creation (see passage the quoted above), but dealt with the curse in the following words:

> God said unto Adam... Hast thou eaten of the tree which I commanded thee that thou shouldst not eat? And Adam said, The woman which thou gavest me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat. And the Lord said unto the woman, What is this that thou hast done? and the woman said, The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat... see what the Lord saith, verse 15. after he had pronounced sentence on the serpent; I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.[18]

The words "thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee" were a proof text for those upholding male supremacy, and Fell chose not to raise this issue. Here, as elsewhere, the early Quakers did not wish to deny the truth of the Biblical account, but it was clearly expedient for them not to select verses that were already within the armoury of their opponents. It was not until the 'seventies and 'eighties when the controversy over separate business meetings for women threatened the unity of the Quaker movement that George Fox perceived the need to tackle this verse directly.

In the fall, then, as in the creation, the Quakers had little to

say about women. Both were usually dealt with by reference to Adam. When Eve was mentioned the early Quakers tended to select verses which demonstrated the joint creation in God's image of man and woman, their joint dominion over creation, their joint disobedience and fall. On the whole, the verses which deal specifically with Eve's creation out of Adam, Eve's prior fall and God's consequent curse are not emphasised. This should not disguise the fact that the early Quakers were to some extent influenced by prevailing views of women as inferior to men. It is evident in some of their arguments in favour of women's speaking (see below, "Christ the Speaker and Teacher", 217-219), and in the strong opposition to separate business meetings for women which was voiced by some Quakers.

Helps Meet in the Restoration
Women in Christ

In the early days of the Quaker movement the work of Christ in undoing the effects of the fall and restoring people back to God was a dominant theme. The possibility of a return to "that state Adam was in before he fell" was open to all, both women and men. Indeed, a higher state was possible: that of being in Christ who never fell. This state was not postponed until heaven, but was to be experienced in this life as the believer heard Christ's voice, and was given power to obey it. The image of God, the power and dominion over creation, the righteousness and purity which Adam had enjoyed before the fall were restored. All this could and should be enjoyed by all true believers on earth, if Christ were to be "a perfect and full redeemer" rather than "but a part of a redeemer"[13] This is the context for the early Quaker

understanding of the equality of women and men: they were created jointly in the image of God, and Christ restored them into God's image again. The position that "[a doctrine of] inner Light... implies a spiritual equality of all people" cannot be traced back to the earliest Quaker writings.[20]

As we have seen, the early Quakers tended to remain silent on the subject of the curse, stressing instead the loss of power, purity and unity with God. By the early 1670's, however, George Fox began to address the subject of the man's ruling over the woman directly:

> For man and woman were helps meet in the image of God, and in righteousness and holiness, in the dominion, before they fell; but after the fall in the transgression, the man was to rule over his wife; but in the restoration by Christ, into the image of God, and his righteousness and holiness again, in that they are helps meet, man and woman, as they were before the fall.
>
> And some men say, man must have the power and superiority over the woman, because God says, 'The man must rule over his wife...' Indeed, after man fell, that command was; but before man fell there was no such command; for they were both meet-helps and they were both to have dominion over all that God made.[21]

Here Fox was emphasising, as Margaret Fell had done earlier, the image of God that man and woman shared in righteousness and holiness, and their joint dominion over all that God had made. He went further, however, by pointing out that the ruling of man over his wife finds its context in the words of God *after* the fall. "Before man fell there was no such command". This assertion could not by any means be denied from the Genesis account. It is a logical implication of the Quakers' belief in Christ's work as restorer undoing the effects of the fall that this command should be abrogated in the restoration. The question must be raised as to why this argument appears relatively late in the movement's development,[22] and then in the context of an internal Quaker debate over

the setting up of separate meetings for women.

One possible explanation is that those outside the Quaker movement would have rejected the premise that the pre-fall state could be enjoyed again on earth, and therefore the Quakers only used this argument among themselves. This is unsatisfactory, however, since the Quakers had no such reservations about preaching perfection to their opponents, which rested on the same assumption. A more adequate explanation may well be the fact that in the early days the Quakers did not push this idea to its logical extremes in connection with women's role. Such a bold conclusion about the position of women in Christ was only reached by Fox after years of thought. It is significant that it occurs in a debate about separate women's meetings where the question at stake was that of authority. The issue of women speaking concerned ideas of inspiration, and it is clear that this was distinct in the minds of many Quakers from the idea of authority. A woman speaking the Quaker message was merely a mouthpiece. A group of women meeting for business was another matter. Fox's argument that female subordination was rooted in the fall and therefore abrogated in Christ was a much needed tool to combat the opposition aroused by the setting up of women's meetings. The implications of this development were far-reaching.

As we have seen, Christ's work had its effects in this life, and in the seventeenth-century Quaker movement, he was at last in the process of restoring all things in himself after the apostasy. If man was only to rule over his wife in the fall, then in Christ this state of female subordination would be swept away as he restored women and men into the image of God again. For the early Quakers this meant more than

an abstract "spiritual" equality not to be enjoyed until heaven. An earlier Puritan writer admitted that there was a "near equality" between men and women, in that they were both of the same "corrupt nature... made after the same image, redeemed by the same price, partakers of the same grace, and heirs together of the same inheritance." Male superiority was therefore

> Only outward and momentary. Outward, in the things of this world only: for in Christ Jesus they are both one. Momentary, for the time of this life only: for in the resurrection in Christ they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven: then all subjection of wives to husbands ceaseth.[23]

Fox's belief that the benefits of Christ's work were to be known on earth was in strong contrast to this kind of understanding of women's place. Furthermore, he believed that his system of men's and women's meetings was a proper outward expression of the redeeming work of Christ. The theme was taken up by Quaker women as well:

> So here is the blessed image of the living God, restored again, in which he made them male and female in the beginning: and in this his own image God blessed them both, and said unto them increase and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and have dominion over the fowls of the heavens, and have dominion over the beasts... And in this dominion and power, the Lord is establishing his own seed, in the male and female,... they were both in the work of God in the beginning, and so in the restoration.[24]

If those Quakers opposing the establishment of women's meetings on the grounds that it gave women an inappropriate amount of power[25] could be brought to admit that man's rule over woman belonged to the fall, then Quaker theology compelled them to admit that this rule was ended by Christ's restoration. In the early days, the Quakers' understanding of Christ's work would not allow them to suppose that there was any aspect of the fall that Christ did not undo in this life.[26] The refusal of those outside the Quaker movement to accept this presupposition, made

Fox's point that female subordination belonged to the fall invalid. Certainly for Fox's Calvinist opponents there was no expectation of full salvation and freedom from the effects of the fall this side of the grave. Even if female subordination had not been a divinely ordered part of creation -- and the Quakers' opponents by no means conceded this -- women were not to presume that salvation freed them from a duty to obey their husbands. The world was still a fallen place, and the structures of the fall still obtained. This meant, according to Bunyan, that the duty of women to submit was doubly imposed: "that duty that she might do as her natural right by creation, she must now do as the fruits of her disobedience to God."[27]

Fox's view that women and men "were both in the work of God in the beginning, and so in the restoration" relied on an understanding of the work of Christ that had been a dominant theme in early Quaker thought from the start of the movement. The outworkings of this belief in relation to the position of women in the group were only explored fully in response to a crisis within the movement, and appear only to have been used consistently amongst the Quakers themselves. The issue at stake was the amount of power it was appropriate for women to exercise, and this is why Fox and other writers stressed woman's joint authority and dominion with man over creation before the fall, (see note 7). The issue of women's speaking arose earlier and called forth a different kind of defence; but one which nonetheless relied heavily on their distinctive understanding of the work of Christ.

Christ the Mediator of the New Covenant

In an earlier section it has been suggested that the early Quakers saw Christ as fulfilling and ending of the practices of the Old Covenant. The Law and the prophets were shadows and types of the second and better covenant which Christ himself mediated. This New Covenant was concerned not with "natural and outward things", but with "inward and spiritual things" which Christ mediated in the hearts of his people. All outward forms were therefore ended. In the New Covenant there was no need for an outward priesthood or temple, for sacrifices, feasts or the Law written on tablets of stone.

The implications of this doctrine were manifold; and although the first Quakers did not start with the idea of challenging prevailing attitudes towards women's ministry, this was one of the effects of the outworking of this particular understanding of Christ's work. All the outward forms which in the Old Covenant had mediated grace, or symbolised God's presence in the midst of his people, were abolished in Christ who fulfilled them all. In the apostasy, the message of the New Covenant had been lost, and people had slipped back into the practices of the Old Covenant, into "forms without power". The message of Quakerism, as George Fox saw it, was intended to "bring people off from their own ways to Christ":

> from their churches, which men had made... to the church in God... which Christ is the head of, and off from the world's teachers made by men, to learn of Christ... From men's inventions and windy doctrines... [from] their schools and colleges for making ministers of Christ, who are indeed ministers of their own making and not of Christ's.[20]

Fox lists here several things which in the apostasy had intervened between

Christ and his role as the only mediator between God and his people: churches "which men had made", the "world's teachers", "men's windy doctrines" and ministers made by men not by Christ. All these were to be abandoned in favour of the "Church in God... which Christ is head of", and where Christ alone taught. This demanded an end to all human ministry; and in all but the most radical sects, this meant an end of an all-male ministry, since the "world's teachers" in the Seventeenth Century were almost exclusively men.[29] This was obviously the consequence rather than the aim of the early Quakers' message; the rejection of the "world's" (male) ministry made way for the ministry of Christ in and through his people, both male and female. The early Quakers believed that it was actually Christ speaking as they proclaimed their message, and therefore the conventional restrictions placed on women's speaking did not apply.

There were several other roles regarded in the Seventeenth Century as "male" which the early Quakers saw as having their true fulfilment in Christ. These included their idea of Christ as the true head of the church, and Christ as husband and bridegroom. If Christ was all and the creature nothing, then the headship of human men was invalid. This, again, was the consequence of the early Quakers' message. They did not set about to dismantle male supremacy, so much as to give Christ his rightful place of authority which had been denied in the apostasy.

Christ the Head

> And now concerning the true headship of the church: Christ Jesus, who died for the sins of the world, and tasted death for every man, is risen from the dead, and set on the right hand of God in the heavenly places, far above all principalities and powers, might and dominions, and every name that is named, not only in the world, but also in that which is to come: and hath put all things under his feet, and gave himself to be head over all things to his church, which is his body,

> the fulness of him that filleth all, and in all, Ephes. 4,5.[30]

The context of this statement of George Fox was an attack on the belief in the Pope as the head of the church. Fox maintains that "never did Christ set up any of the apostles to be the head of the church upon the earth", and that those who "set up any man to be Pope or chief head of the church" have erred from Christ, "who was the head of the church in the apostles days... [and] is still to all true Christians". Belief in the mediation of Mary and the saints similar treatment from Fox:

> There is but one mediator betwixt God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who is head of his church; and whosoever hath set up, or do set up other mediators betwixt God and man, than the man Christ Jesus, are in the apostasy from the apostles doctrine, and follow their own doctrines.[31]

Nothing, Fox believed, should be allowed to come between Christ and his role as the one head and mediator. One Quaker, writing over twenty years before Fox made the above statement, expressed this belief forcefully:

> Ye that choose a man and set him up to be your head and receives [sic] orders and commissions from him, you go about to take the authority from Christ, and to rob him of his glory.[32]

This raised questions about obedience to civil authorities -- should servants obey their masters, or tenants their landlords? Their attitude to Scripture did not allow the Quakers to reject human authority, since Paul exhorted the church in Rome to "be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God." [Rom 13: 1, 2.] When challenged, the Quakers stated that honour was due to human authorities, and that they should be obeyed, unless they ordered something which was contrary to the will of God:

> We believe that obedience and subjection in the Lord belongs to superiors, and that subjects ought to obey them in the Lord that have rule over them; and that children ought to obey their parents, and

wives their husbands, and servants their masters in all things, which is according to the Lord.

Neither doth the light... teach them to... subvert the rule of duty between masters and servants, between husbands and wives, between parents and children... but the light leads and teaches the Quakers to live the life the Scriptures declare of, to the fulfilling of them; and to inform masters and servants, husbands and wives... of the rule of their duty to God, and to one another.[33]

What seems to appear from this is a division of authority. In the church, no-one was to have authority but Christ, since he was the one true head of the church. To set up a human head was to rob Christ of his rule. In the world, on the other hand, it was right and proper for those in authority (masters, landlords, magistrates, husbands) to be honoured and obeyed, as long as their rule was not in conflict with Christ's rule. This much seems conventional and undisturbing, until we ask to what extent the early Quakers saw the rule of human authorities as being in conflict with Christ's rule. In the early days of the movement the answer appears to have been, to a considerable extent. The first Quakers saw themselves as part of the Lamb's army engaged in the final battle against the Beast, the man of sin, and all the forces of evil described in the book of Revelation. As well as their missionary campaign, the Quakers' warfare took the form of protests against tithes, oaths, and the laws restricting nonconformist meetings; and protests against certain aspects of the social code of the day, i.e. bowing and doffing the hat to superiors and equals, ornate and empty compliments, use of titles, and the polite use of the "you" form of address to a single person. The first kind of protest was met with fines and imprisonment, the second with abuse and violence.

For the first decades of Quakerism the religious group was the focus of all the energies and attention of its members. Their distinctive dress, speech, and religious practices, as well as their aggressive

evangelistic methods, and stance against tithes and oaths, meant that every area of their lives was affected by their beliefs. Arrest and imprisonment could come at any moment, even to those not actively involved in preaching. It was not easy for the first Quakers to live unobtrusively and remain untroubled, since their behaviour, which they saw as commanded by God, brought them into constant conflict with those around them.[34] This puts a different perspective on the early Quakers' attitude to human authorities. In practice, it might be more accurate to say that they believed that human authorities were *only* to be obeyed when their rule coincided with Christ's rule, rather than always to be obeyed unless they commanded something contrary to God's will. The Quakers' contemporaries certainly viewed them with suspicion, accusing them of having "some levelling design",[35] and of encouraging disobedience to superiors. This suspicion was not without some justification, as civil obedience was only a temporary measure for the Quakers. The end of all things was at hand:

> The Lord will overturn, overturn the nation, and will create new heavens and new earth, wherein shall dwell righteousness... And by his sword will the Lord plead with all flesh, and the slain of him shall be many; corrupt judges and officers will the Lord sweep away... the fire is kindled and the sword is drawn, happy is he that keepeth himself from fighting against the Lord and his work.[36]

How did this kind of belief affect relations between husband and wife? If the wife was a Quaker, and the husband was not, then her obedience to Christ would bring her into conflict with her husband, since her new faith was not simply a matter of attending different services on Sundays, but of a changed lifestyle. It depended on the personalities of the couple and the quality of their relationship how this conflict was resolved. Margaret Fell's marriage appears to have continued happily after her conversion to Quakerism, although Judge Fell never himself became a

Quaker. Other marriages did not fare so well:

> Mary Akehurst... suffered much cruel usage from her... husband, who bound her hand and foot, and grievously abused her, for reproving one of the priests who had falsely accused her. Her husband also kept her chained for a month together, night and day, attempting in vain by such cruelty to deter her from the profession of truth, as held by the Quakers, to which she nevertheless with Christian courage and constancy adhered.[37]

This kind of behaviour by a Quaker wife was sanctioned as late as 1674:

> But if a the Spirit of the Lord command or move a godly and spiritually learned woman to speak, in this case, she is the Lord's, more than her husband's, and she is to speak, yea, though her husband should forbid her.[38]

As we have seen, the first Quakers were prepared to admit when challenged that it was appropriate for wives to obey their husbands. Their thought in this area is ambiguous, however. At least two writers admonish children to obey parents, and servants to obey masters, while omitting to mention wives obeying husbands.[39] By 1673, George Fox had reached the position where he could tell an opponent that "thy ruling over thy wife and eldership is in the Fall... In the restoration ... [men and women] are helpsmeet in the righteousness and image of God, and in the dominion over all that God had made."[40] He did not say that man's headship of woman was in the fall, however. Clearly he could not have done so without flatly contradicting parts of the New Testament, in particular, Eph 5:23: "The husband is head of the wife, even as Christ is head of the Church". What we tend to find is a characteristic silence on the part of the Quakers over this and similar verses. Fox's style, when he does on one occasion mention male headship, is not lucid. He quotes from Scripture, but without indicating clearly whether he is doing so in order to expound it, or in order to show that he is in simple agreement with its surface meaning. The following is an extract from his *The Woman Learning in Silence*:

[The unlearned] are to learn in silence, and not to speak, as saith the law, but learn of Christ their husband who makes free from the law, Christ in the male, and Christ in the female.

Husbands love your wives, and be not bitter against them. Wives submit yourselves to your husbands as unto the Lord: the husband is head of the wife, even as Christ is head of the church, and is the saviour of the body: Therefore the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be subject to their own husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ loved the church, and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it, with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it a glorious church, without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, that it should be holy and without blemish: so ought men to love their wives as their own bodies; he that loveth his wife loveth himself, for no man ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes it and cherishes it, even as the Lord the church, for we are members of his body, of his flesh and of his bones; for this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and be joined to his wife, and they twain shall be one flesh: This is a great mystery, I speak concerning Christ and the church; He that hath an ear, let him hear this great mystery; now the unlearned men wrest it, and the unstablished, who know not this great mystery; you are ignorant of the Lord's work, and the voice of his prophets, who are wondering at the prophesying of the daughters, who make yourselves ignorant of the Scriptures, and are wondering at the Lord's prophets, his daughters, which Joel the Lord's prophet spoke of... I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and daughters shall prophesy... and also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my Spirit, saith the Lord.[41]

The first sentence quoted here identifies Christ as the husband, and implies that he is husband of male and female. What follows in the next paragraph is a lengthy quotation from Ephesians (5:22-32), preceded by a short quotation from Col 3:19, "husbands love your wives and be not bitter against them". Fox stresses that this is a "great mystery" which those who are unlearned "wrest". This is a reference to 2 Pet 3:16, which describes Paul's epistles as containing "some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do the other scriptures, unto their own destruction." This passage from Ephesians, according to Fox, falls into the category of things "hard to understand". Fox might mean either of two things here: that the application of this passage on husbands and wives to the issue of women's speaking is a

"wresting of Scripture"; or, on the other hand, that those who interpret the "great mystery" which refers *solely to Christ and his church* as referring to human husbands and wives are guilty of "wresting" Paul's meaning. If the first explanation is correct, then Fox must be saying that the issue of male headship is irrelevant to women's speaking, and must not be used by the "unlearned" as a reason to condemn women prophets. His omission of verse 33 of Ephesians 5: "nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband" may support the second interpretation. There are strong hints elsewhere in Fox's writings that he wished to use traditional understandings of the marriage relationship (i.e. wifely submission) as a metaphor for the church's relationship with Christ, without wishing that understanding to be normative for Quaker marriages. In the light of this, it seems to me that we cannot safely assume that Fox is assenting to the surface meaning of these verses from Ephesians. His emphasis (both in the title as well as in the text) that woman's submission is a "mystery" ought in itself to serve as a caution.

Whether or not he intends at this point to argue that Paul is referring to Christ and the church and not to husbands and wives, it is safe to say that on other occasions Fox described Christ as the head of both male and female. Other writers did so as well. "Feel the seed of God [i.e. Christ] in every particular to be head in the male and in the female and then ye come to be bone of his bone, and flesh of his flesh"; "Christ is the head of the male and the female, who may speak"; "Christ the husband, in the male and female, the head in the male and female, is one; and it is he, the one in all, both in the male and female, that

speaks."[42] The last two quotations here link Christ's headship of the male and female with the right to speak. This is a reminder that the early Quakers were not concerned primarily with a discussion of equality of the sexes. Discussion of the place of women arose in the early days out of a need to justify women's speaking, and was worked out more fully later to support the setting up of women's business meetings. The idea of "equality" as an abstract ideal did not concern the Quakers. Theirs was a practical and active equality, a freedom to do something, to preach, to prophesy.

Although the early Quakers did believe that Christ was head of both male and female, the passages which stated clearly in the New Testament that "man is head of the woman even as Christ is head of the church" posed problems. Certainly their opponents saw male headship as precluding women's public ministry, and therefore this theme could not be readily exploited in defence of women's speaking. The recurring imagery of marriage in the Bible to describe the relationship between God and his people, however, provided scope for the early Quakers to make use of the idea of Christ as husband and bridegroom in a way that overturned the usual arguments put forward for women's submission and silence in the church.

Christ the Bridegroom and Husband of the Male and Female

The idea of Christ as husband, and the church as his bride in early Quaker thought draws on a wealth of biblical imagery from both Testaments. Israel as God's faithless wife appears in the prophets, most strikingly in the book of Hosea; and the covenant relationship

between God and his people is often described in terms of marriage. The early Quakers, in common with their contemporaries, also read the Song of Solomon and Psalm 45 as allegories of the relationship between Christ and his church. Additional weight was given to this image by Jesus' description of himself as the bridegroom (and his disciples as "the children of the bridechamber") in the synoptic Gospels, and by John the Baptist's words in John 3:29: "he that hath the bride is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice." The parable of the wise and foolish virgins, and that of the marriage feast of the King's son in Matthew's Gospel also strengthened the association between Christ and the bridegroom; and the parable of the marriage feast finds a companion piece in Revelation 19:7,9: "the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready... Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb." In addition to this, Paul uses similar imagery in his epistles, notably in the Ephesians passage discussed above, which portrays Christ as the husband, and the church as the bride, who is to be presented to him without "spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing."[43]

This material was used in a variety of ways by the early Quakers in defence of women's speaking. In particular, it was employed to answer the two New Testament passages usually quoted by their opponents: "Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law. And if they will learn any thing, let them ask their husbands at home: for it is a shame for a woman to speak in the church" (1 Cor 14:34,35); and "Let the women learn in silence with all

subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence" (1 Tim 2:11,12). The following extracts illustrate some of the ways in which the early Quakers made use of the imagery of Christ as the husband and the church as his bride in defence of women's speaking:

> Moreover, the Lord is pleased, when he mentions his church, to call her by the name of woman, by his prophets, saying, I have called thee as a woman forsaken, and grieved in spirit, and as a wife of youth,... And David, when he was speaking of Christ and his church, he saith, The King's daughter is all glorious within... Psal. 45. And also King Solomon in his Song, where he speaks of Christ and his church, where she is complaining and calling for Christ, he saith, If thou knowest not, O thou fairest among women, go thy way by footsteps of the flock,... And John, when he saw the wonder that was in heaven, he saw a woman clothed with the sun...
>
> Thus much may prove that the church of Christ is a woman, and those that speak against the woman's speaking, speak against the church of Christ... That is to say, those that speak against the power of the Lord, and the Spirit of the Lord speaking in a woman, simply, by reason of her sex, or because she is a woman, not regarding the seed, and Spirit, and power that speaks in her; such speak against Christ.
>
> Was not Israel that went forth from her spiritual husband, called an harlot, or a whorish woman? and were not there many males and females to make up this woman that had forsaken her husband? Is not Christ the husband? Is not his church the bride of Christ? is not he as well the husband of the males as of the females, and of the females as of the males?... Christ the husband, in the male and female... is one; and it is he, the one in all, both in the male and female, that speaks; and the male as well as the female is that woman that is not to speak, who hath not learned Christ.
>
> Let that woman which hath so foully transgressed [i.e. the "popish queen"] be silent... but ask your husband at home, for the wo-man is not permitted to speak in the church, nor about church matters, but the daughters of the Lord, as well as the sons, shall, and at this day do prophesy, and God is one in the male as in the female, but the woman is to be silent in them both... If you keep your eyes in your head, and behold the original in thee, and ask your husband at home, ye will seal to, and witness with me, that God is truth, and is one in the male and in the female.[44]

The main thrust of Margaret Fell's argument in the first extract is that "those who speak against the woman's speaking, speak against the church of Christ". Since the church of Christ was described as a woman,

those who take the apostle's words literally were in danger of forbidding the church to speak. In any case, it was the "seed [Christ], and Spirit, and power" of the Lord that spoke in the woman (and in the church), and so those opposing women's speaking simply on grounds of her sex were in fact speaking against Christ.

Patrick Livingstone uses the idea of the church as the bride of Christ in a slightly different way in the second extract, but to serve the same purpose of defending women's speaking. His point is that the church is the bride of Christ, and that since the church is made up of males and females, Christ is the husband of men as well as women. This leads him to the position, evident also in the third extract, where "the woman that is not permitted to speak" becomes a spiritual principle in both men and women. It is an unlearned spirit that must be taught by Christ the husband at home, i.e. within; and until it became "learned" it was to remain silent. Thus the Pauline injunctions on women's speaking applied equally to men. Once the spirit was "learned", restrictions on speaking no longer applied. Furthermore, it was Christ who spoke in the male and in the female, and he was not to be restricted.

This habit of perceiving a deeper spiritual meaning underlying the surface meaning of Scripture is typical of the first Quakers, (see chapters 2 and 5), but it would be misleading to suggest too great a degree of consistency in the movement over the interpretation of these texts. The early Quakers were united in their desire to defend women's speaking, but arrived at different methods of explaining the verses which required women to be silent. We find, therefore, on different occasions, conflicting understandings of what the apostle meant. These

fall into three categories. The first -- mentioned above -- sees a deeper spiritual principle underlying the texts' surface meaning. The second finds that the apostle is not referring to preaching and prophesying when he exhorts women to keep silent, but to some other kind of speaking. Thomas Camm, for instance, interprets the passage from Timothy in the following way:

> By the text, women's teaching and prophesying is not prohibited, but to speak, which speaking must by the words before related, be understood to be questions tending to strife and the disturbance of the church, wherefore it's said, let her ask her husband at home.[45]

The third kind of interpretation sees the restrictions as applying only to women who were unregenerate, as Eve was in the fall. Once women had been restored by Christ again, he could speak through them as he could through regenerate man. This may be seen clearly in George Fox's writings, for example in his letter to the Duke of Holstein in 1684:

> Now, here the duke may see, what sort of women were to be in silence and in subjection, who the law commands to be silent, and not to usurp authority over the man, nor to speak in the church; these were unruly women. In the same chapter he commands women 'not to plait or broider their hair, nor to wear gold, pearls, or costly array'. These things were forbidden by the apostle; and such as wear such things, are to learn in silence and to be subject, and not to usurp authority over the men, for it is a shame for such to speak in the church.[46]

Margaret Fell combines aspects of the second and third kinds of interpretation in *Women's Speaking Justified*, where she concludes that the apostle is referring to "a woman in relation to her husband, to be in subjection to him, and not to teach, nor usurp authority over him, and therefore he mentions Adam and Eve". The women concerned were not the true believers, but such that wore "gold, and pearls, and costly array". "But let it be strained to the utmost", continues Fell, "as the opposers of women's speaking would have it, that is, that they should

not preach nor speak in the church, of which there is nothing here."[47]

In spite of these variations, it is evident that the idea of Christ as husband was a popular one amongst the early Quakers. It is not ~~as~~ easy to estimate the extent to which it influenced the behaviour of Quaker women, or their understanding of themselves; but it appears to have been exploited by some Quaker women preachers in attempts to foil their persecutors. Elizabeth Williams and Mary Fisher, for example, were arrested for preaching in Cambridge in 1653 and brought before the Mayor.

> He asked their names: they replied, their names were written in the book of life. He demanded their husbands' names: they told him, they had no husband but Christ Jesus, and he sent them. Upon this the Mayor grew angry, called them whores, and issued his warrant to the constables to whip them at the market cross till the blood ran down their bodies.[48]

The Mayor's reason for asking their husbands' names was presumably because husbands might be expected to exercise some sort of control over their wives and forbid them to travel and preach. Quaker women in travelling ministry appear sometimes to have been dismissed as foolish, or even mad, by their contemporaries. To many they posed a threat, for who could control women who were clearly not under the authority and protection of any man? Their claim to have no husband but Christ must have appeared menacing to those who already viewed the Quakers with suspicion.

The marriage imagery used by the early Quakers did not visualise marriage as an equal partnership. The New Testament texts spoke of the husband as the head and required the wife to be obedient and submissive, and although this was consonant with their understanding that Christ was all and the creature nothing, it was in tension with the beliefs

expressed by Fox and others in the 1670's and later, that the man's ruling over his wife was part of the fall, and done away with in Christ. The question remains whether marriage itself was in some sense a type that was fulfilled and ended in Christ. One scholar suggests that this cannot be the case: "outward marriage predates the Fall and is not abolished by the marriage of the Lamb." She illustrates this by reference to George Fox's statement about his marriage to Margaret Fell, which he said was "a Figure or Testimony... of the Church coming out of the wilderness, and the marriage of the Lamb." This, she concludes, must be a different sort of figure from Fox's "'types, figures and shadows', for nothing is *ended*."[43] It is certainly true that the Quakers did not assert that marriage was abolished, but there is more to be said here. The key lies in Fox's use of the word "testimony", which indicates that he saw his marriage to Fell as a prophetic act. Indeed, nothing was ended, but the marriage pointed to the approaching time when it would be. The true church was the woman come, *and coming* out of the wilderness. The unrealised aspect of early Quaker eschatology must not be overlooked in this context. When the marriage of the Lamb was fully realised, not only in the hearts of believers but also throughout the whole creation, then all earthly institutions (including marriage) would be at an end. In that day men and women would be like the angels of God, neither marrying nor giving in marriage. The fact that outward marriage pre-dates the fall is not important, since believers were brought up into a higher state than pre-fall innocence, into that of Christ himself.

Despite various indications, most notably in Fox's writings, that the early Quakers wished to challenge the prevailing understandings

of male headship, they were able at the same time to make good use of the prevailing ideas of male supremacy by defining Christ as the true "heavenly man", the one head and husband, and by applying female imagery to men and women alike. Thus he was the Quakers' one true teacher and speaker, speaking in and through any male or female he chose.

Christ the Speaker and Teacher

> And so Christ, 'by whom all things were made, he was the first, and he is the last'; and he is the Quakers' first speaker, and the last; for God hath spoken unto us by his Son, that God who was the speaker unto, and teacher of Adam and Eve in paradise before they fell: and the serpent was the false teacher and speaker, Christ bruises the head of him, and through death destroyed him [that was] the power of death, to wit, the devil.[50]

This extract from an epistle by George Fox sets the eschatological context for the early Quaker understanding of Christ as teacher. Christ had destroyed the devil and his false teaching and had become the teacher of the Quakers again, as he had been the teacher of Adam and Eve in paradise. The phrase "God hath spoken to us by his Son" is a reference to the letter to the Hebrews, which says that "[God] hath *in these last days* spoken unto us by his Son." [My italics]. The sense of living in the last days characterised early Quaker thought, and the fact that Christ had at last come again to teach his people himself transformed their understanding of the nature and function of preaching. True preaching did not consist of prepared sermons and expositions that relied on "human learning". Instead, its end was to bring people to the state where they no longer needed outward preaching, but could learn directly of Christ as he spoke in the heart; for in the New Covenant Christ the true teacher abrogated all forms of outward human teaching. The "world's teachers" had forms without power, preaching their own

words without the direct inspiration of Christ and his Spirit.

In contrast, the first Quakers believed that it was Christ speaking through them as they preached, and this gave them room to claim that restrictions on women's speaking did not apply to God's female messengers:

> For it is not the woman that speaks, but the Spirit of the Father through the male and female, according to Christ's saying in Matt. 10:20. It's not you, saith Christ, that speaks, but the Spirit of the Father that speaketh in you: now it's not the man nor the woman that speaketh, but the Spirit of God the Father.[51]

This left the early Quakers with the problem of explaining what the apostle meant when he exhorted women to be silent. Three kinds of response to this problem are outlined above (see above, 212-3), the first of which (i.e. the idea that the woman who is to be silent is a spiritual principle within unregenerate men and women) is most interesting in this context.

Richard Farnworth addressed this issue in 1654 in a pamphlet entitled *A Woman Forbidden to speak in the Church*. His argument is based in the early Quaker understanding of the church. The true church was not an outward building, but the community of believers, since in the New Covenant God was no longer to be worshipped in the temple at Jerusalem, but "in spirit and in truth". From this he concludes that

> nothing is to speak in this church which is spiritual, but that which is spiritual, even the Holy Ghost, which is invisible and incomprehensible; the woman or the wisdom of the flesh is forbidden to speak in the church, that is, of the things of God.

The "woman" is here interpreted as "the wisdom of the flesh", and later as "the first birth", "the carnal part", the "carnal wisdom", or simply, "the flesh". This fleshly principle was found in both men and women before they were regenerate, and was to remain silent. "Flesh shall

[not] prophesy neither in sons nor daughters, that is forbidden." Instead, "let the Spirit speak, for that is permitted either in son or daughter."[52] The restrictions that the Quakers' opponents judged the apostle to be placing on women's speaking were applied by the Quakers to all men as well as women who were unregenerate. At the same time, they believed that no restrictions applied to women who were regenerate.[53]

This attitude, while bringing with it a large measure of equality in the Quaker movement, nonetheless relied on a derogatory understanding of women. It is not possible to interpret the "woman who is to be silent" as the carnal or fleshly wisdom that rules the unregenerate nature of all people in the fall, without the implication that women are in some sense more fleshly and sinful than men.[54] This impression is strengthened by a tendency on the part of some early Quaker writers to stress the maleness of Christ as he spoke through men and women. Farnworth, for instance, says that

> [Paul] saith, let your women keep silence in the church... but he doth not say, let the Spirit of God keep silence in the temple, but that may declare where it is manifested, either in male or female, and then it is *the man* Christ that speaks in them. [My italics].[55]

George Keith uses similar language in his attack on the Church of Scotland and its opposition to women's speaking: "now ye would bring Paul's words against women speaking in the church, or rather against Christ *the man* his speaking in them," as does Patrick Livingstone: "it is not the woman, but Christ *the man* that speaketh in the male and in the female." [My italics].[56] The contrast between the flesh and the Spirit is linked with a contrast between female and male, which has the unhappy result of implying that the feminine has no part in the life of the Spirit. Of course, the early Quakers would have claimed that human

nature (both male and female) has no part in the life of the Spirit; but the idea that maleness is somehow better, or more spiritual, is present in early Quaker thought. "If the Lord open the mouth in the female-man, as well as in the male-man... let the whole creation show forth his praises", wrote one Quaker in 1659. The suggestion here is that regeneration for women means their transformation into (female) men.[57]

The effect of the early Quakers' use of the idea of Christ as the one teacher and speaker was therefore double-edged. On the one hand it challenged the contemporary understanding of a woman's role. Christ alone was to speak, and human men and women were to be silent.[58] This was a radical departure from the conventional interpretation of the New Testament texts concerning women in the church. On the other hand it relied on the identification of "the women who is to be silent" as "the flesh", which maintained an atmosphere in which a belief in female inferiority could thrive.

Conclusion

The aim of this chapter has been to show how the early Quakers' distinctive understanding of the work of Christ affected their understanding of women in the movement. This issue was raised primarily because of a need to justify the early Quaker practice of allowing women to speak, and later in face of the opposition to women's meetings. Any understanding of equality was centred not upon a doctrine of "'inner light'... [that] implies a spiritual equality of all people", but on the idea either that Christ could speak through the regenerate woman as well as the man, or later on the belief that women and men were created jointly in God's image to have dominion over the earth, and were

restored to that image and dominion by the work of Christ.

The Quakers' ideas were at odds with the prevailing views of the Seventeenth Century, and they were forced into a selective use of Scripture when they wished to discuss the role of women in the creation, fall and of God's curse. There was little reference, for instance, to the creation of Eve out of Adam, or to the curse that God spoke to Eve; both of which were taken by their opponents to indicate male supremacy. Margaret Fell believed that God made "no such distinctions and differences as men do" between men and women, and others countered the suggestion that Eve was first to sin with the claim that women were also the first to preach the resurrection. Eventually, George Fox articulated the idea implicit in earlier writings that the effects of the fall were undone by Christ, and "the reproach [came] to be taken off from women", since women as well as men were restored again into God's image. The results of this restoration were to be enjoyed on earth, and this included an end to man's ruling over woman. This belief was used by George Fox in his defence of women's meetings, which were strenuously opposed by many. The issue at stake in this controversy was power; and Fox's aim was to demonstrate that women and men shared in God's power in the beginning, and should do so again in Christ's restoration.

Early Quaker defences of women's speaking tended to rely on their understanding of Christ as the fulfilment of the Old Covenant. In the New Covenant there was no longer any need for outward forms of worship, or for human heads and teachers, since Christ had come to teach and lead his people himself. Christ was to be all, and the creature nothing in his church. This raised questions about human authority, and whether earthly masters, husbands and magistrates should be obeyed. The

early Quakers held that they should, unless their rule was in conflict with Christ's. In the early years of the movement, when the Day of the Lord was "come and coming", the conflict was keenly felt, and civil disobedience was the only option for the faithful Quaker. Thus the authority of human husbands and heads was to be submitted to the rule of the one true husband and head -- Christ. As the early eschatological vision faded the concerns of Christ and those of the world could be more easily separated, and Christ's reign did not compete as fiercely with that of earthly husbands.

Their belief that Christ was the true head and bridegroom of the church, coupled with a desire to defend women's speaking, led to a reluctance on the part of the early Quakers to take literally those biblical passages which exhorted women to silence. The restrictions, some felt, either referred to certain kinds of speaking, e.g., questions tending to strife; or to certain kinds of women, e.g., those who wore gold and had "broidered" hair; that is, unregenerate women. Women who had come out of the fall to Christ could speak; or, more accurately, Christ could speak through regenerate women as well as regenerate men. Other early Quaker writers perceived a deeper spiritual meaning in these texts. The "woman who was to be silent" was the unregenerate flesh in both men and women. The husband of whom "she" was to learn was Christ, the man.

This method of interpretation relied on an association of female with "the flesh", and male with the spirit. Although it was used as part of an argument to allow women greater freedom and authority, the imagery was at odds with the aim. The idea that women were in some sense inferior to men was by no means absent from early Quakerism, but

in the context of the Seventeenth Century, the extent to which they were prepared to accept women as preachers and missionaries is remarkable. This acceptance probably arose originally from the sense of urgency of their mission and of being prophetic witnesses in the last days, for the Spirit was being poured out on daughters as well as sons, as the prophet Joel had foretold. From a very early date, however, their defence of women preachers was linked closely with their understanding of Christ as the head and bridegroom of his church, who alone had the right to speak in and through his people. "Who is it that dares stop Christ's mouth? that now is come to reign in his sons and daughters?"[69]

Endnotes

[1]Hope Elizabeth Luder, *Women and Quakerism*, Pendle Hill Pamphlet 196, (Wallingford, Pennsylvania: Pendle Hill Publications, 1974), 4. Luder goes on to say that "any individual who earnestly seeks truth, the experience of God's presence, and the knowledge of what is good, has the potential for finding these things within himself or herself". These two statements will not do as a summary of Fox's "central idea", and consequently are no basis for a correct understanding of the early Quaker position on the role of women. Luder does make some reference to the fall, and states that in the "time of the spirit... there should now be the same equality that prevailed in the time before Eve was ordered to obey Adam", 5, and this goes further towards an explanation of the freedom allowed to early Quaker women. A similar line is taken by Robert J. Leach in *Women Ministers: A Quaker Contribution*, Pendle Hill Pamphlet 227, Ruth Blattenberger, ed., (Wallingford, Pennsylvania: Pendle Hill Publications, 1979):

> Historically, the place of women in the ministry of Friends finds its origin in Fox's statement, "I came up by the flaming sword to the place where Adam stood before he fell"... According to Genesis, when the disobedient Adam and the disobedient Eve were sent out from the Garden of Eden, they carried certain punishments, one of which was that Eve should obey her husband. But in returning to the place before the Fall, where this punishment had not existed, Fox found man and woman equal before God, both sharing in the divine nature which is masculine and feminine, and both having the right to speak the Word of God.

No reference is made here to the work of Christ in restoring women and men to the pre-fall state, and Leach seems to have an odd understanding of what Fox meant by coming up "to the place where Adam stood before he fell". "In other words," he writes, "Fox had no sense of original sin, nor of the necessity of being saved from original sin, because he did not believe that Adam's sin was inherited." These certainly *are* "other words". Fox himself wrote that "there is no people upon earth come from the first Adam's state in the earth, drove from God in sin, and death, and unrighteousness, to the second Adam's state, but who come to the light." *An Epistle to all People on the Earth*, 96. See also Jacques Tual, "Sexual Equality and Conjugal Harmony: The Way to Celestial Bliss. A View of Early Quaker Matrimony", *Journal of Friends' Historical Society*, 55, (1988), 161-174. Tual believes that there were "new opportunities offered to Quaker Prophetesses, which relied on Fox's interpretation of the Inner Light doctrine", 162.

[2]Burrough, *Description*, 116.

[3]Fell, *The Standard of the Lord revealed*, (no printer's name or place, 1667), 1, 2. See her comments in *Women's Speaking Justified*: "here God joins them together in his own image, and makes no such differences and distinctions as men do." This idea that "differences and distinctions" between men and women were not created by God is found also in a later tract:

> they were both in the work of God in the beginning, and so in the restoration. But if the work of the old serpent, put them out of the work of God, and as he did in the beginning tempt them to sin and transgression, and disobedience, so he would still keep them there, and make a difference, and keep a superiority one over another, that Christ the head should not rule in male and female; and so keep them in bondage, and slavery, and in difference and dissention one with another, and then they are fit for his temptations.

Sarah Fell[?], 1675-80[?], quoted in Milton D. Speizman and Jane C. Kronick, "A Quaker Women's Declaration", *Signs*, 1:1, (1975), 231-245, 245.

[4]Fox, "To all the Women's Meetings that are Believers in the Truth," (1672), Epistle CCXCI, in *The Works of George Fox*, 8 vols., (Philadelphia: Marcus T. C. Gould, 1831), vol. 8, 39-41, 39. On at least one occasion elsewhere men are referred to as "meet helps" to women, in *A Testimony for the Lord and his Truth*, epistle from the Women's Yearly Meeting at York, 1668, 3.

[5]Bunyan, *First Ten Chapters of Genesis*, 438. Bunyan's view of female subordination is a little ambiguous. He says paradoxically that it is both Eve's "natural right by creation", and also "the fruits of her disobedience". See also the various conduct guides of the Seventeenth Century which outline the position and duty of women, often arguing her subordination from the second creation account in Genesis; for example, Gouge, *Domesticall Duties*, 270: "The circumstances noted by the Holy Ghost at the woman's creation imply no less, as that she was created after man, for man's good, and out of man's side." Fox, on the other hand, appears on occasion to take Eve's creation out of Adam's rib as an indication of Adam's and Eve's interdependence: "then when [the serpent] had got the woman down that was made of a rib of man, and now having got the beam down all the house came down." Extract from a sermon by Fox, reproduced in Barbour and Roberts, *Early Quaker Writers*, 502-11. Cf. John Locke's view of female subordination and Genesis:

> God, in this text, gives not, that I see, any authority to Adam over Eve, or to men over their wives, but only foretells what should be the woman's lot, how by this providence he would order it so, that she should be subject to her husband, as we see that generally the laws of mankind and customs of nations have ordered it so; and there is, I grant, a foundation in nature for it.

Quoted in Jean Bethke Elshtain, *Public Man, Private Woman. Women in Social and Political Thought*, (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1981), 124-5. Here subordination is not based in creation, but is simply a social phenomenon connected with the good ordering of nations.

[6]Nayler, *Love to the Lost*, 1.

[7]Fox, "To all the Men's and Women's Meetings everywhere, epistle CCCLX, in *Works*, vol. 8, 169-175, 169; sermon reproduced in Barbour and Roberts, *Early Quaker Writings*, 502-511. When Fox speaks of women and men sharing in the image of God, he tends to stress their shared dominion over all that God had made. This is because the context of these comments was the internal debate in the Quaker movement about the setting up of separate business meetings for women. This move was seen by many as allowing women too much authority, particularly as all marriage proposals had to be submitted to the women's meeting as well as to the men's. The issue at stake was power (an important Quaker theme) and Fox's logic seems to have been that women shared as much authority as men in the image of God.

[8]Fell, *Women's Speaking Justified*, 3.

[9]Bunyan, *First Ten Chapters of Genesis*, 438. Bunyan does temper this judgment slightly: "Although the Scripture doth lay a great blot

upon women, and cautioneth men to beware of these fantastical and unstable spirits, yet it limiteth man in his censure: she is only to be rejected and rebuked, when she doth things unworthy of her place and calling." 439.

[10]Farnworth, *Woman Forbidden to Speak*, 4. An underlying sense of female inferiority is not absent from early Quaker writings, however. It may be observed in the reluctance of many to accept separate women's business meetings, and sometimes in the arguments used to defend women's speaking.

[11]Nayler, *Love to the Lost.*

[12]Fox, *Journal*, 7.

[13]Fell, *Women's Speaking Justified*, 3.

[14]Sarah Fell [?], quoted in Speizman and Kronick, "Quaker Women's Declaration", 245. This line of attack is typical of the early Quakers. They responded in a similar way when disparaged for attracting only "the under sort of people" to their numbers, see *The Mittimus answered by which R. H. was sent Prisoner to Norwich Castle*, (1654), in *Books and Writings*, 37-40, 37.

[15]This seems to me to be the essence of early Quaker theology. For a variety of reasons their practice was not entirely consistent with it. In terms of ministry and what could be called work for the kingdom, theory and practice were more or less united. In the early days of the movement, this meant considerable power and responsibility for women, since work for the kingdom was everything and time was short. Home and husband were to be sacrificed if Christ called a woman to travel in the ministry. By the end of the century, however, there was a change in atmosphere and expectations. There was a gradual divergence of the interests of the kingdom and of the world, and whereas women still retained a large degree of freedom to minister in the work of the kingdom, there was a good deal of resistance to them having any power in church government. This is seen clearly in the opposition to the setting up of women's meetings for business. The amount of concern for the proper running of the Society of Friends increased as concern for converting society at large dwindled. The area in which women could exercise authority became more circumscribed. The home became again the place for women, where little had changed to challenge the idea of male headship, in spite of Fox's best efforts.

[16]Fell, *Standard of the Lord*, 3; Rofe, *The Righteousness of God to Man*, 1; Fell, *Women's Speaking Justified*, 3; Watson, *Testimony*, 5. The "reasonings and resistings" for which Watson commended Eve were seen in a different light by Bunyan:

> 'And the woman said'. Indeed, the question was put to her, but the command was not so immediately delivered to her; 'The Lord commanded the man'... This therefore I reckon a great fault in woman, an usurpation, to undertake so mighty an adversary, when she was not the principal that was concerned therein; nay, when her husband who was more able than she, was at hand, to whom also the law was given as chief. But for this act, I think it is, that they are now commanded silence, and also commanded to learn of their husbands... A command that is

necessary enough for that simple and weak sex,
First Ten Chapters of Genesis, 428-9.

[17]Elizabeth Bathurst, *The Sayings of Women which were Spoken on Sundry Occasions, in Several Places of the Scriptures*, (London: Andrew Sowle, 1683), 24; Dorcas Dole, *Once more a Warning to thee O England, but more particularly to the Inhabitants of Bristol*, (no printer's name or place, 1683), 14; George Fox, "For the Duke of Holstein", 1684, in *Journal*, Bicentenary ed., edited by Norman Penney, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1911), vol. II, 404; Penn, *Rise and Progress of the Quakers*, 171.

[18]Fell, *Women's Speaking Justified*, 3,4. The other occasion when she speaks of the fall and the curse she notes that "[God] would greatly multiply [Eve's] sorrow in her conception, and in bringing forth children", but makes no reference to Adam's ruling over her, (*Standard of the Lord*, 5).

[19]James Parnell, quoted above, see n38, Chapter 1.

[20]There are possible exceptions to this; e.g. Patrick Livingstone's *Truth Owned and Deceit Denied and Witnessed against*, (London: no printer's name, 1667), 47:

> In John 1, 1,9, where it is said, The Word which was with God, was the true light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world; which word man signifieth both man and woman; and as it maketh no difference in the enlightening, neither doth it in their speaking,

This is not a particularly early tract, and the context here is specifically women's preaching, and Livingstone's main argument rests on his understanding of Christ as head and husband of the male and female, (see below for further discussion). To attribute the early Quakers' radical stance on the position of women solely to the "inner light" is inadequate. In the context of marriage one scholar suggests that "if *each* person possessed God-within, then it made no sense for a woman to "love, honour and obey'." Elaine Huber "A Woman Must Not Speak: Quaker Women in the English Left Wing," in Rosemary Ruether and Eleanor McLauchlin eds., *Women of Spirit: Female Leadership in the Jewish and Christian Traditions*, chap. 5, 154-181, 158. The question of male headship in a godly marriage was by no means clear in early Quaker thought, in any case.

[21]Fox, "To All the Women's Meetings", epistle CCXCI; Epistle CCCXIII, (1674), in *Works*, vol. 8, 66-73, 69. Henry J. Cadbury comments that Fox "without challenging the received mores in English society... was aware of the unused collective resources of the Quaker women as a group, and encouraged their participation." "George Fox and Women's Liberation", *The Friends' Quarterly*, (Oct. 1974), 370-376, 374. It is difficult, however, to imagine a stronger challenge to society's mores on marriage than the assertion that male supremacy is abolished in Christ.

[22]It remains possible that the early Quakers used this argument from an earlier date, but I have not seen an example of it. Certainly it is absent from Fox's early defence of women's preaching, *The Woman Learning in Silence; or The Mystery of the Woman's Subjection to her Husband: as*

also The Daughter Prophesying, wherein the Lord hath Fulfilled and is Fulfilling what he Spake by the prophet Joel, (1656), in *Gospel Truth Demonstrated*, 77-82, where his argument rests on an understanding of the state of being "under law", and that of being in Christ "which makes free from the Law", 77. Neither does it appear in Fell's *Women's Speaking Justified*. See, however, a Fifth-Monarchist Tract of 1653, by John Rogers, *Ohel or Beth-Shemesh*, which discusses women's position:

> Now Christian liberty hath these two parts, viz. deliverance from, and freedom to; deliverance from the curse, power and punishment of the law, and from the observation of traditions, Col. 2;20, which women have equal benefit of with men. And so in freedom to the worship and service of God, the ordinances of Christ, the kingdom of Christ, grace and glory; which also appertains to women as well as men, being restored by Christ to that equal liberty (in all the things of God, and in the Church of Christ) with men, which they lost by the Fall; and they are now again to become meet and mutual helps; for all are one in Christ, says the text.

Extracts quoted in Irwin, *Womanhood*, 170-179, 173.
Rogers was more careful than Fox to distinguish between spiritual and temporal things, thereby setting a limit to women's liberty: "all sorts of believers are under a civil or spiritual rule. In the civil there are such differences of fathers, children, masters, servants, magistrates, subjects, men and women; but in the spiritual rule and government of Christ in his Church all are one, without respect of persons." Ibid., 172-3. Rogers was using this argument to support women's "liberty of voting or speaking in common affairs" in church government.

[23]Gouge, *Domesticall Duties*, 423.

[24]Sarah Fell[?], in Speizman and Kronick, "Quaker Woman's Declaration", 236.

[25]There were other reasons for opposing the setting up of women's meetings, e.g. that they were an innovation, see Richard Smith, *The Light Unchangeable*, (London: no printer's name, 1677), 23.

[26]Logically the early Quakers would have had to claim that the curse on the land and man's need to eat his bread in the sweat of his face, and woman's sorrow in childbirth were done away with in Christ. In the early days of the movement it seems likely that they did believe that this was in the process of being fulfilled, or that fulfilment was imminent. Thomas Salthouse wrote of a woman

> [who was] delivered of a daughter by the mighty power of the Lord, before she travailed she brought forth, to the astonishment of the heathen that cannot believe, and to the praise and honour of him that hath taken away the curse and redeemed his own from under the transgression, who is risen with healing in his wings,

(Quoted in Hugh L. Doncaster, "Early Quaker Thought on 'That State in which Adam was before he Fell'", *Journal of Friends' Historical Society*, vol. XLI, (1949), 13-24, 16, 17.) There were obvious difficulties with this kind of claim, however; as there were with claims of miraculous healings. It was clear that not all were healed, and that Quakers still suffered in childbirth, and had to labour on the land to make a living. Much more stress was laid on their belief that Christ had restored that which was lost in the fall. It may also have been manifestly clear to the impartial observer that Quaker husbands still ruled over their wives.

[27]John Bunyan, quoted above.

[28]Fox, *Journal*, 35-39. Quoted more fully above, 55-56.

[29]It also meant an end to a ministry that excluded the uneducated and underprivileged. Logically it entailed also the end of "female" ministry as well. All human activity was to end, to make way for Christ.

[30]Fox, *The Man Christ Jesus the Head of the Church*, (1679), in *Gospel Truth Demonstrated*, 702-718, 714.

[31]Ibid., 714, 715, 717.

[32]John Harwood, *A Description of the True Temple of God*, (London: Thomas Simmons, 1658), 16-17. Cf. a churchman's description of the role of a minister:

> He is likewise the people's interpreter to God, ie. his office is to stand in the gap between God's wrath and them, to intercede with God for pardon of their sins, to pray in Christ's name for his blessings and graces to be poured upon them, and to give thanks in their names for mercies received,

R. Boreham, *A Countryman's Catechism*, (London: 1652), 6.

[33]Burrough, *Declaration*, 225; Roger Haydock, *A Hypocrite Unvailed*, 63.

[34]See above, chapter 3.

[35]See Audland, *Snare*, 6.

[36]Burrough, *Warning*, 12.

[37]Besse, *Sufferings*, 711. It would be interesting, of course, to know how Akehurst had treated his wife before she became a Quaker.

[38]Keith, *The Woman-Preacher of Samaria*, (no printer's name or place, 1674), 24. The right to speak did not simply mean preaching amongst those who were already Quakers. In Mary Akehurst's case, it meant reproving a "priest". We can only speculate about the kind of language and manner she employed on this occasion, but given that she appears to have been a woman of some courage, her speech may well have come into the category of "railing", for which the first Quakers were notorious.

[39]See William Caton, *Salutation and Advice*, (London: Thomas Simmons, 1660); Hubberthorne, *Rebukes of a Reviler*, 135.

[40]Fox, *Journal*, 667.

[41]Fox, *Woman Learning in Silence*, 78. Reay regards this tract as evidence that Fox accepted male supremacy, *Quakers and the English Revolution*, 26.

[42]Fox, Epistle XCIX, vol. 7, 102-103, 103; Fell, *Womens Speaking Justified*, 16; Patrick Livingstone, *Truth Owned*, 46. The quotation from

Fox draws on Adam's words about Eve in Genesis ("bone of his bone, and flesh of his flesh"), which are also echoed in Ephesians 5:30, in the context of Christ and the church: "we are members of his body, of his flesh, of his bones". It is worth noting that by describing Christ as head of both male and female, the early Quakers were tacitly challenging Paul's statement that "the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is head of the church." [Eph 5:23].

[43]This is a good example of the Quaker habit of gathering together associated ideas from the Scriptures and relating them to their experience of Christ in the heart.

[44]Fell, *Women's Speaking Justified*, 4; Livingstone, *Truth Owned*, 46; E[dward] B[illing], *A Word of Reproof and Advice to my Late Fellow Soldiers*, (London: T. Simmons, 1659), 25.

[45]Thomas Camm, *A Testimony to the Fulfilling the Promise of the Lord relating to such Women, who through the pouring out of God's Spirit, are become Prophetesses*, (London: Andrew Sowle, 1689), 10. This is a later, less radical interpretation, as is the following quotation from Thomas Maule:

> For whereas they are not permitted to speak in the church it is to be understood relating to the government of the church, in which they are to keep silence, and be under obedience, as also in the law; for the outward government of the church God hath committed unto men,

Truth Held forth and Maintained according to the Testimony of the Holy Prophets, Christ and his Apostles, (no printer's name or place, 1695), 125.

[46]Fox, "For the Duke of Holstein", 404.

[47]Fell, *Women's Speaking Justified*, 8.

[48]Besse, *Sufferings*, 84. This kind of nonco-operation may well have been a common Quaker tactic; doubtless made very necessary by industrious informers and persecuting officials. Besse provides another example which occurred during the trial of William Dewsbury in 1655:

> Judge; What is thy name?
> W.D.; Unknown to the world.
> Judge; Let us know what name that is, that the world knows not.
> W.D.; It is known in the light, and not any can know it but him that hath it; but the name the world knows me by, is William Dewsberry.
> Judge; What countryman art thou?
> W.D.; Of the Land of Canaan.

Chap. 27, 525. Claiming Christ as husband is a theme which also occurs later in Shaker thought: "no man is my head, but Christ Jesus... I am married to the Lord Jesus Christ! He is my head and my husband, and I have no other." Mother Ann Lee (founder of the Shakers), quoted in Marjorie Proctor-Smith, *Women in Shaker Community and Worship: A Feminist Analysis of the Uses of Religious Symbolism*, (New York: Edwin Mellen Press, 1985), 101.

[49]Kuenning, "Christ's Wife", 22.

[50]Fox, *To all the Kings*, in *Works*, vol. 5, 313-341, 335.

[51]Camm, *Testimony*, 8. Camm speaks here of the "Spirit of God the Father" speaking, rather than Christ; but there is, in fact, little distinction made between Christ and the Spirit in early Quaker thought. The language in this case is clearly determined by the choice of text, (Matt 10:20). It remains possible that some Quakers occasionally took literally the command to women to be silent. One woman alleged that John Story had "grieved" women in Bristol "bidding them go home about their business and wash their dishes, and not go about to preach; and said Paul did absolutely forbid women to preach". Elizabeth Sterridge, quoted in Marcia Bell Jones, "The Shaping Spirit: the Autobiographies of Early Women Friends", (typescript in Friends' House Library, London), 41. Jones does not appear to find Sterridge an altogether reliable writer; but Fox noted in an epistle that "Moses and Aaron and the seventy elders did not say to those assemblies of women, we can do our work ourselves, and you are more fit to be at home to wash the dishes", which suggests that comments of the kind Sterridge attributes to Story had been made. *An Encouragement to all the Faithful Women's Meetings*. Quoted in Irwin, *Womanhood*, 190.

[52]Farnworth, *Woman Forbidden to Speak in Church*, 2-4.

[53]The significance of this interpretation is explored by Mack, "Gender and Spirituality"

> [the Quakers'] altering of the popular meaning of womanhood, holding to it as a negative abstraction while rejecting its descriptive value for individual, sanctified women, must have seemed a very effective argument -- indeed, the only possible argument, both theologically and strategically -- that could justify the public authority of female prophets in a patriarchal world,

47. There were other possible arguments, however, and the Quakers exploited them on many occasions. There are reasons to believe, furthermore, that some writers (significantly Fox and Fell), resisted too facile an equation of "the woman who is to be silent" with an unregenerate principle. Mack's assertion that "self-annihilation", (a "pre-requisite for the preaching of both sexes"), was depicted as "killing the woman within the self" must be treated with caution. If the Quakers referred to the killing of any woman within, it was almost certainly the scarlet whore mentioned in the Book of Revelation. Elsewhere the Quakers state on numerous occasions that the woman was to learn of Christ the husband, not be killed.

[54]This view of women has a long history, and it would be misleading to claim that the early Quakers were not influenced by it.

[55]Farnworth, *Woman Forbidden to Speak*, 5. This has points of contact with the ideas of earlier Anabaptist writers. Balthasar Hubmaier (1480-1528), "believed that Adam and Eve were allegorical representations of mankind, with Adam standing for the highest in man, and Eve for the lowest and basest. Adam was 'a type of the soul (as is Eve for the flesh)'." Keith L. Sprunger, "God's Powerful Army of the Weak: Anabaptist Women of the Radical Reformation", in Greaves, ed., *Triumph over Silence*, 45-74, 48.

[56]George Keith, *Help in Time of Need*, (no printer's name or place, 1665), 30; Livingstone, *Truth Owned*, 46. Cf. a point made by an

opponent of women's meetings: "where the power and authority of the Spirit of God was ever the same in any female, as in the heavenly male, Christ Jesus, or in those males he breathed on,... you are silent." Smith, *The Light Unchangeable*, 27-28.

[57]B[illing], *Word of Reproof*, 25.

[58]See Fell, "So I warn you to be silent, and to wait low in the silence, until the word be committed to you to minister". "Epistle of Margaret Fell to Friends," (1654), in *Remarkable Passages*, 53-56, 55.

[59]Fox, *Woman Learning in Silence*, 81.

CHAPTER 5

THE BIBLE AND WOMEN'S MINISTRY IN EARLY QUAKERISM

Introduction

> For man and woman were helps meet in the image of God, and in righteousness and holiness, in the dominion, before they fell; but after the fall in the transgression, the man was made to rule over his wife; but in the restoration by Christ, into the image of God, and his righteousness and holiness again, in that they are helps-meet, man and woman, as they were before the fall.[1]

These words were written by George Fox in 1672, and represent the culmination of more than two decades of Quaker thought on the issue of women's ministry. Although this argument appeared at a relatively late stage in the beginnings of Quakerism, (see above, Chapter 4), there is much to suggest that it was the logical outcome of their original theology and practice. From the earliest days of the Quaker movement women were involved alongside the men in the life of the group and, significantly, in preaching. This was in the face of considerable opposition; for the weight of traditional church practice, social expectations and conventional interpretation of the Scriptures were against such a development. Neither the previous ecclesiastical tradition of the apostate church, however, nor the social expectations of the fallen world were of importance to the early Quakers in deciding what was appropriate for those restored in Christ. The Scriptures, on the other hand, were not lightly to be dismissed, and their importance in early Quakerism has been examined in Chapter 2 above. Several elements of the early Quaker understanding of the role of Scripture (combined with their understanding and experience of the work of Christ), enabled them to find in the Bible a message about women contrary to the traditional teaching on silence and subordination.

The early Quakers, as we have seen, distinguished between the Word of God, which was Christ, and the Scriptures, (the letter), which they took to be a declaration of that Word. This meant that the Scriptures were not the sole or final arbiter in questions of faith and church practice. It was not the Bible, but "the Holy Spirit, *by which the holy men of God gave forth the Scriptures*, whereby opinions, religions and judgments were to be tried."[2] It was the Holy Spirit, then, who was to try the issue of women's role in the Quaker movement. However, as the words in italics imply, the Spirit and the Scriptures were not to be set in opposition to one another. The early Quakers never swerved from their view that the writers of Scripture were inspired by the Spirit, that it was by the Spirit that the Scriptures were given forth; and that those who did not possess the same Spirit who gave forth the Scriptures could not possibly interpret them correctly. There was, the early Quakers believed, a great unity between the Spirit, the Scriptures, and the hearts of those living in the Spirit. How, then, did the first Quakers reconcile their attitudes towards women and the passages of Scripture which place restrictions on women's ministry?

By claiming that Christ was the Word of God, and the Scriptures were a declaration of Christ, the early Quakers were laying down their main principle of Biblical interpretation. It was Christ to whom all Scripture pointed and in whom all Scripture was fulfilled -- Christ in his glorious Second Coming, judging the world by his light, appearing in the midst of his people as prophet and heavenly High Priest after the dark night of the apostasy, and restoring all things to God again. This was the central message of Quakerism and it was to this truth that the Scriptures and the hearts and lives of the Quakers bore witness.

Two important points should be noted here. Firstly that it was the *activity* of Christ by his Spirit, not simply his *being* that dominated early Quaker thought. He had appeared to judge and destroy sin, to teach his people and lead them up to perfection. Secondly, it must be remembered that their method of biblical interpretation was always governed by their eschatological outlook in the early days of the movement. The appearance and activity of Christ signified that the early Quakers were living in the last days. These two aspects brought about a great concern for the state of perfection which was seen by the Quakers as part of the wider restoration and reconciliation of all things by Christ in the end times. This was the goal of salvation -- the day when the human race and the whole of creation would be restored to the state of perfection that they had enjoyed before the fall, and to an even more glorious and stable state: that of Christ, who would never fall. This led to a great interest in the Genesis account of creation and the pre-fall state of the human race, and also to the passages of Scripture which spoke of the time of eschatological fulfilment, and of what it meant to be "in Christ". This was significant for their attitude towards women in the group, for the various passages of the Scriptures that advocated women's silence and subordination were read in the light of these two concerns. In interpreting the Bible, the early Quakers set aside traditional understandings of the Scriptures in favour of an interpretation that reflected their experience of Christ and their belief that his restoring work was to be known in the present.

The Re-interpretation of the New Testament Material on Women

The following six sections examine in some detail the New Testament passages which restrict women's ministry, or speak of female subordination; showing how the early Quakers interpreted them, and incorporated them into their system of belief. In each case the translation of the Bible used here is the King James version, since this was the one usually quoted by the Quakers themselves.

1 Cor 11:3-15.

This passage raised a number of questions for the early Quakers, since it appeared to root male supremacy in the creation rather than the fall. It also spoke of man as the head of woman, and Christ as the head of man, in a way which appeared to present man as some kind of intermediary between Christ and woman. The first two subsections attempt to show how the early Quakers dealt with these issues. However, 1 Cor 11:3-15 also provided the Quakers with a useful proof text to support women's speaking, since the debate about women covering their heads when praying and prophesying presupposed that the Apostle allowed such activities.

Creation

By the time George Fox was expressing his argument that male supremacy was part of the fall and therefore to be abolished in Christ, there was already a strong Quaker tradition of making use of the creation accounts of Genesis 1-3 to support the early Quaker doctrine of perfection and restoration, (see Chapter 1 above). A good deal of

attention had already been directed to the texts in order to distinguish between what was part of God's original plan, and what pertained only to the fallen state. This would have involved a conscious setting to one side of traditional understandings of the material in favour of an interpretation that reflected their experience of Christ, and their belief that his restoring work was to be known in the present. More significantly, however, such a reading of the Genesis material appeared also to be at odds with various New Testament passages which rooted female subordination in the creation, and not the fall. The most striking example is found in 1 Cor 11:3,8,9: "but I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God... for the man is not of the woman; but the woman of the man. Neither was the man created for the woman; but the woman for the man." George Fox was not unaware of the possible conflict between his understanding of Genesis and the view expressed in Corinthians. Indeed, it is clear that he was challenged on this point. His defence was as follows:

> And some men say, man must have the power and superiority over the woman, because God says, 'The man must rule over his wife; and that man is not of woman, but the woman is of the man.' Indeed, after man fell, that command was; but before man fell there was no such command; for they were both meet-helps and they were both to have dominion over all that God had made. And as the apostle saith, 'for as the woman is of the man,' his next words are, 'so is the man also by the woman; but all things are of God'. And so the apostle clears his own words; and so as man and woman are restored again, by Christ up into the image of God, they both have dominion again in the righteousness and holiness, and are helps-meet, as before they fell. So then the man is not without the woman, neither the woman without the man in the Lord.[3]

We see in this passage the early Quaker concern with the pre-fall perfection and the restoration in Christ. Fox sums up his understanding of the state of man and woman before the fall: "they were

both meet-helps and they were both to have dominion over all that God made". The idea that man and woman were "meet-helps" for one another is a dominant theme in Fox's interpretation of the Creation accounts. He appears to derive it from his understanding that male and female were created jointly in the image of God, and shared together in having dominion over creation. From this he reasons that if the woman was a meet help for man, then man must likewise be a meet help for woman:

> 'Let us make man in our image... in the likeness of God created he him, male and female created he them.'... Here the female which was the meet-help for Adam, and they both male and female were meet-helps, joined in government, dominion and rule, being in the likeness and image of God.[4]

The Yahwist account of creation is read here in the light of the Priestly. This is characteristic of the early Quakers. It was the Priestly account which spoke of the image of God and God's commission to the man and the woman to have dominion over the creation, (Gen 1:27,28), and it was here that the early Quakers saw most clearly the unique and glorious position of the man and the woman in God's purposes to which they were themselves being restored in Christ. The fact that all Scripture pointed to Christ and was fulfilled in him did not prevent some passages containing a clearer or more direct declaration of the Word than others. Gen 2:18 ("and the Lord God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him") did not therefore condition Fox's understanding of the image of God. The woman was not any less in the image of God because she was created after man and as a "meet help" for him. Fox's opponents, taking the description of woman's creation in Gen 2:18 as a starting point, inferred from it that woman was inferior to man, and that the image of God did not reside in her in the same sense as it did in the man.

Judging other passages by in this light, they derived a very different picture of woman's nature and role from that held by Fox and his companions.

This, then, provides the background for Fox's exegesis of 1 Cor 11:3-15. His concern for the pre-fall created perfection which was restored in Christ predisposed him to emphasise certain verses in preference to others, and it is clear that he viewed versees 11 and 12 as the key to interpreting the whole passage, and as the culmination of Paul's argument. ("Nevertheless neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man, in the Lord. For as the woman is of the man, so is the man also by the woman; but all things are of God.") Fox was aware that this passage from Corinthians appeared to root woman's subordinate state in creation rather than in the fall. His imaginary opponent refers to Gen 3:16 and links it with a quotation from 1 Cor 11: "man is not of woman, but the woman is of the man". Fox makes it clear that this verse must be read in the light of the words "so is the man also by the woman; but all things are of God". It is thus, Fox claims, that the apostle "clears his own words". This might mean either that Paul "clarifies" his words, or that he "clears" himself of implying that woman is inferior to man because of the nature of her creation, since all things ultimately derive from God. The role of mutual helping that Fox believed was given to man and woman in creation was restored in Christ: "so as man and woman are restored again, by Christ up into the image of God, they... are helps-meet, as before they fell. So then the man is not without the woman, neither the woman without the man in the Lord". This last sentence (verse 12) refers to the restored state "in Christ", which for the Quakers meant the present, not some future

fulfilment in heaven.[5]

The context in which Fox's beliefs are expressed here is the controversy in the Quaker movement about the establishment of separate business meetings for women. It scarcely constitutes are careful and patient exegesis of 1 Cor 11:3-15, and internal evidence suggests that Fox was quoting from memory rather than consulting the page. Problems remain in this passage which Fox does not address; most notably the issue of male headship.

Headship

"But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God", (1 Cor 11:3). This verse poses a serious problem for Fox's position on women in the church. He appears to have been aware of it, but it was never satisfactorily resolved in his writings. Fox's argument was that the man's "power and superiority" over his wife was part of the fall and therefore abrogated in Christ. Did this mean that male headship over woman was abolished? This is certainly the logical conclusion of Fox's reasoning. The idea that man might be a necessary intermediary between Christ and woman was abhorrent to Fox and completely at odds with the message of early Quakerism.[6] Fox spoke elsewhere of Christ the "head in the male and the female", and warned that those who "go from the Seed of God [i.e. Christ] in themselves, and set up other heads, they lose the one head, which is Christ Jesus; and then come to be covered in darkness".[7] The last quotation does not occur in the context of men and women in the church, but the possibility of applying this principle to the issue remained. It is my contention

that Fox did believe that Christ, and not man, was head of woman in the restoration and therefore that male headship was abolished; but that he was prevented from stating this directly by the New Testament references to man as head of woman. At one point he rebuked an opponent by saying "thy ruling over thy wife and eldership is in the Fall". The role of elder was a New Testament office adopted by the Quakers[8] and not restricted to men, but Fox was suggesting here that his opponents were "but elders in the Fall":

> I told them that he and they were but elders in the Fall, ruling over their wives in the Fall, but neither he nor they must rule over widows and young women, and other men's wives.[9]

Although Fox remained unable to say "thy headship is in the fall", it is difficult to place any other interpretation upon his words. Even if a husband might choose to domineer over his wife, an elder should not therefore presume to rule over women in general. There was no place for male "rule" in the church of Christ.

Given that men were not to domineer over women, were the early Quakers trying to define headship in such a way that it precluded the idea of male authority and female subservience? Some such interpretation may have been attempted in the relationship between the women's and men's meetings. One Quaker woman had this to say on the subject:

> love and good works... is the one end and product of our meetings, distinctly and respectively, the men Friends, who discharge their places, to whom the godly women give the preeminence, as brethren, and the women Friends in their places, not seeking to rule over one another, but that we may be furtherers of one another's joy, and be one another's crown of rejoicing in the Lord.[10]

Here "preeminence" was voluntarily given to the men by the women, with neither attempting to dominate. This careful balance of power was not

advocated by another writer, whose use of 1 Cor 11:3 to defend the establishment of women's meetings was much more bluntly in favour of male headship:

> [Paul] presseth us to take notice of it, saying, I would have you know, That the head of woman is the man. If so, then if our meetings consist with the headship, they are justified by this Scripture...
>
> If women be taken into men's meetings, appointed for outward or temporal concerns, with equal freedom to sit, speak and act with them, then I see no headship man hath: for if he hath any, it must be either in temporal or spiritual matters. In spiritual matters he hath none, for the same apostle... affirms [Gal 3:28] that male and female are all one in Christ; that is, in services purely spiritual, relating only to Christ and the soul, such as prayer and prophecy...
>
> But on the other hand, women Friends meeting by themselves, may without the least suspicion of usurping authority over the men, confer and reason together, how to serve truth in their places, in such things as are most proper and suitable for them, still submitting to the wisdom of God in the men's meeting.[1]

This passage is strikingly different from Fox's defence of women's meetings both in style and in theological method. The tone is apologetic rather than polemical. The writer, William Loddington, seeks to prove that women's meetings are justified by Scripture and "consist with the headship". He is presumably answering the accusation that such meetings were a usurping of male authority, and in doing so he affirms male headship in a way which Fox appears to have found himself unable to do. There is no talk here of restoration in Christ, and of male and female sharing in the work of God as they had done in the beginning. Instead we see a division emerging between "spiritual" and "outward and temporal" concerns. In spiritual concerns, which are defined as prayer, prophecy and more vaguely as "services... relating only to Christ and the soul", man has no headship. Headship, reasons Loddington, must therefore pertain to temporal and outward concerns; and here man is to have authority over woman. Such a distinction between temporal and

spiritual concerns is at odds with Fox's idea of the work of God which men and women were to share in together. In the restoration, as in the creation, men and women were, according to Fox, "helpsmeet in the righteousness and image of God, in the dominion over all that God made"[12] Male and female were helpsmeet both spiritually ("in the righteousness and image of God") and practically ("in the dominion over all that God made") It would be extremely difficult to argue that Fox saw men as having authority over women in temporal concerns.

On the issue of male headship, then, the Quakers were not united. Fox and Loddington, however, and many other Quakers, were united in their defence of women's meetings. The aim was the same, even if arguments varied. We may conclude either that Fox was unaware of the kind of defence put forward by Loddington, or that being aware of it, he was prepared to countenance it in the face of such aggressive opposition to his system of women's meetings. It would have been hard for him in any case to reject a statement affirming male headship that argued so forcibly from Scripture, yet did not seek to suggest that men were spiritual heads of women. The theme of headship emerges again in the context of other New Testament texts, and will be discussed below.

Prophecy

Despite the problems which 1 Cor 11:3-16 raised for the view that male superiority was part of the fall and therefore done away with by Christ, the passage also contained material to support women's speaking in public. The discussion about head coverings presupposes that women were to pray and prophesy in public, and the early Quakers made use of this, and other passages, to defend their practice of

allowing women to preach. "If [Paul] had stopped women's praying or prophesying, why doth he say, 'Every man praying or prophesying, having his head covered, dishonoureth his head; but every woman that prayeth or prophesieth with her head uncovered, dishonoureth her head'?"[13] This amounts to a challenge by Margaret Fell to those whose starting point for discussion of women in the church was "let your women keep silence in the churches". Fell's point is that the Apostle could not have meant literally that all women were to be silent all the time, since they were permitted to pray and prophesy. By doing this she is raising the question of interpretative method in which one verse or passage is allowed to illuminate or constrain another. Her exegesis is able to take both passages into account: women in Christ are allowed to pray and prophesy, but ungodly women are to remain in silence. Those maintaining that women are to be silent on all occasions in the church are left with the problem of interpreting satisfactorily the verse referring to women praying and prophesying with their heads uncovered.

Questions about the nature of the head covering referred to in the passage do not appear to have troubled the early Quakers. Their concern was less with ensuring that women were properly covered than with seeing that men removed their hats in meetings for worship. Disagreement about this point was the cause of fierce controversy within Quakerism at various points. Nor is it perfectly clear what they thought the woman's head covering symbolised. Was it, as many modern translators and commentators suppose, seen as a sign that the woman was under the authority of men?[14] This seems unlikely, given the Quaker view that all authority in the Church belonged to Christ, and that it was Christ that spoke in and through both men and women. We may be

certain, however, that the consistent practice of the early Quakers of allowing women to speak on the same terms as men was unprecedented, and must have been viewed as enduing women with a new Christ-given authority. At this point the Authorised Version's translation of verse 10 is illuminating. Following the Greek more faithfully than many modern translations, it renders the verse in these words: "for this cause ought the woman to have power on her head because of the angels." This idea is taken up by at least one Quaker woman:

> But those who are witnesses of the first resurrection and be risen with Christ in the power and Spirit, that raiseth from the grave, and gives power over death's reign and dominion, destroying the Devil and his works. If this power moves to declare its own mind and will... this is a true ministry in the will of God, in his Spirit and power; Christ Jesus the everlasting Gospel, and here the woman usurps not authority over the man, but hath power on her head because of the angels.[14]

The "power" which the woman was to have on her head was the power and spirit of the risen conquering Christ. This empowered women to perform a "true ministry in the will of God".

1 Cor 14:34,35.

This passage often appears linked with 1 Tim 2:11-15 in the writings of the early Quakers, since the content is similar. In this section the issue of women's speaking will be examined, and the interpretative question of what was meant by "asking her husband at home". The problem of what was understood by women's teaching and usurping authority over the man will be dealt with in the next section.

Silence

1 Cor 14:34,35 was used by opponents of Quakerism as a proof text against women's public ministry. "Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak: but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law. And if they will learn anything, let them ask their husbands at home: for it is a shame for women to speak in the church." This passage was interpreted by the early Quakers in a variety of ways (see Chap. 4 above), but there was a general agreement that it could not mean what on face value it appeared to say.

One of the ways the early Quakers sought to explain this passage was to suggest that the apostle did not wish to prohibit women's prophecy so much as to prevent some other kind of "speaking". Thomas Camm, as we have seen (above, Chap. 4), thought that women ought to be prohibited from asking "questions tending to strife and the disturbance of the church", while another writer, Thomas Maule, felt that women ought to keep silent on matters "relating to the government of the church,... for the outward government of the church God hath committed unto men".[15] Both these tracts were written towards the close of the century when the radical stance of the earliest Quakers on the role of women was being tempered by social considerations, i.e., the complex relationships between the group and the hostile world in which they needed to survive.

Another method of interpretation was to seek a deeper "spiritual" meaning beneath the surface of the text. What was the apostle referring to when he ordered women to keep silent in the church? What did "the woman who is to keep silent" symbolise? Again, different

writers found different answers to this question. As we have seen, Richard Farnworth concluded that "the woman or the wisdom of the flesh is forbidden to speak in the church". William Mather asked an opponent "whether man's wisdom that preaches, be not the woman that should not be permitted to teach in the church?"[17] As we have seen, this kind of exegesis had both negative and positive effects. Although it was an attempt to defend women's right to speak, at the same time it was undermined by the negative implications of using "the woman" to symbolise "the flesh", (see Chap. 4). It was linked with the idea of Christ as head and husband, which is a good example of Quaker eschatological allegorising. There remained, however, a different way of explaining this problem passage which was more favourable to women and more far-reaching in its theological implications.

In 1657 George Fox addressed the problem contained in 1 Cor 14:34,35:

> And the Apostle said, Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection, for I suffer not a woman to speak, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence, as saith the Law. 1 Tim. 2, 11, 12. Yet saith the Lord, I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh, and my sons and daughters will prophesy, Joel 2, Acts 2. And they that are led of the Spirit are not under the Law; and be swift to hear and slow to speak, saith the Apostle, and he speaks of the many unruly and vain talkers, and such teachers as be out of the faith, and had gotten the form of godliness, which were to be turned away from, which crept in in those days, which were to be silent; so here is a time to speak, and a time to keep silence...
>
> You teachers and professors which say you have not the Spirit of God, that gave forth the Scriptures, then you had not that birth that they [the writers of Scripture] had, so then you have the other birth, the flesh, so you are in the time to keep silence.[18]

The focus of Fox's interpretation here is found in the words "they that are led of the Spirit are not under the Law". He begins by quoting what is a conflation of 1 Cor 14:34,35 and 1 Tim 2:11,12; taking the phrase "as saith the Law" as the key to understanding the passage. He goes on

to say "Yet saith the Lord, I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh, and my sons and daughters will prophesy". His use of the word "yet" clearly implies that Fox saw the quotation from Joel and Acts as putting the reference to the Law into perspective. He intends to contrast the time of the Law with that of the Spirit. This is made more explicit towards the end of the extract when he contrasts those who have the "other birth, the flesh" (i.e., who are still under the Law) with those who have the Spirit of God (and the second birth). Rather than suggesting that the woman who is to be silent is a symbol of "the flesh", Fox seeks here to put 1 Cor 14:34,35 into a wider context in which various types of people are not to speak. "He speaks of the many unruly and vain talkers, and such teachers as be out of the faith... which were to be silent." The caution "be swift to hear and slow to speak" applied to all, not simply women.

This kind of widening of the context and appeal to what the Apostle meant by "as saith the Law" is found more clearly expressed by Margaret Fell:

> And now to the Apostle's words, which is the ground of the great objection against women's speaking; and first 1 Cor. 14. let the reader seriously read that chapter, and see the end and drift of the Apostle in speaking these words: for the apostle is there exhorting the Corinthians unto charity, and to desire spiritual gifts, and not to speak in an unknown tongue; and not to be children in understanding... and that the spirits of the prophets should be subject to the prophets; for God is not the author of confusion, but of peace: and then he saith, Let your women keep silence in the church, etc.
>
> Where it doth plainly appear that the women, as well as others, that were among them, were in confusion; for he saith, How is it brethren? when ye come together, every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation? let all things be done to edifying. Here was no edifying, but all was in confusion speaking together; therefore he saith, If any man speak in an unknown tongue, let it be by two or at most three, and that by course; and let one interpret; but if there be no interpreter, let him keep silence in the church. Here the man is commanded to keep silence as well as the woman, when they are in

confusion and out of order.

But the Apostle saith further, They are commanded to be in obedience, *as also saith the Law*, and If they will learn anything, let them ask their husbands at home; for it is a shame for a woman to speak in the church.

Here the Apostle clearly manifests his intent; for he speaks of women that were under the Law, and in the transgression as Eve was, and such as were to learn, and not to speak publicly, but they must first ask their husbands at home; and it was a shame for such to speak in the church: And it appears clearly, that such women were speaking among the Corinthians, by the Apostle's exhorting them from malice and strife, and confusion, and he preacheth the Law unto them, and he saith in the Law it is written, With men of other tongues, and other lips, will I speak unto this people, verse 21.

And what is all this to women's speaking? that have the everlasting Gospel to preach, and upon whom the promise of the Lord is fulfilled, and his Spirit poured upon them according to his Word.[19]

Fell's main point here is that the verses relating to women must not be taken out of context. She urges the reader to read the chapter seriously in order to grasp "the end and drift of the Apostle in speaking these words". This she takes to be his plea that "all things be done to edifying", and from his words deduces that at Corinth there "was no edifying, but all was in confusion speaking together". This is the context in which she wishes the reader to understand the Apostle's words to women: "here the man is commanded to keep silence as well as the woman, when they are in confusion and out of order."

The words "as also saith the Law" were as significant to Fell as they were to Fox. Fox's tract appeared some nine years before Fell's and it would be hard to believe that the two had not discussed the question of women's speaking on many occasions. Fell's tract is a refinement of Fox's previous arguments. Her exegetical method is different from his -- she confines herself to a much more careful analysis of the text in front of her -- although the central ideas remain very much the same.[20] By speaking of the Law, Fell believes, the

Apostle "clearly manifests his intent". He is referring to women "who are under the Law, and in that transgression as Eve was". These women, and only these, are to be silent; for "what is all this to women's speaking, that have the everlasting Gospel to preach, and upon whom the promise of the Lord is fulfilled, and his Spirit poured upon them according to his Word?" This was also Fox's argument: it is a claim that those who have the Spirit poured upon them are no longer under the Law, and the same appeal to Joel and Acts is made.

At the heart of such claims lay the dramatic experience of Christ that permeated all early Quaker belief and practice. Quaker women (and men) were able to speak and preach the everlasting Gospel because, they believed, the promise of the Lord had been fulfilled in their midst, and his Spirit poured out on them.

"Let them ask their Husband at Home"

"If they will learn anything, let them ask their husbands at home: for it is a shameful thing for women to speak in church". This verse needed interpreting if it were not to be a serious barrier to women's preaching; and it lent itself admirably to the kind of allegorising of which the first Quakers were fond. As we have seen, the wealth of marriage imagery in the Bible, and their tendency to see Christ as the fulfilment of all types and shadows, suggested to the Quakers that the verse was in fact referring to Christ as husband. Since all people needed to learn of him "at home" (i.e., "within"), then the "woman" who was to be silent must be "the flesh", or some unregenerate principle in the heart, (see above, Chap. 4).

This method of interpreting the text was not used by all. Some

took a more literal line, and although they accepted that the Apostle did not intend to forbid women to pray and prophesy, they believed that he did wish them to be silent under certain circumstances. Thomas Camm felt that women should ask their husbands at home about "questions tending to strife and the disturbance of the church" and remain silent on such topics in public worship. Thomas Maule took the view that women were to be silent on matters "relating to church government", and ask their husbands about things which lay outside their sphere. He also gave thought to those women who would be unable to do this, and suggested that "such women whose husbands are unbelievers, or that have no husband, a believing brother hath liberty to inform them in things relating to the government of the church".[21] Maule advances no reason why "it is to be understood" that when women are not permitted to speak it is on the subject of church government; or why he believes that "the outward government of the church God hath committed unto men". It scarcely needs to be said that this is a long way from Fox's understanding of the role of women in the work of God: "all are to work in his righteousness, and his image, in his power, in his garden to subdue the earth, and keep the dominion in his power, in the restoration, as man and woman did in the image of God before the fall."[22] Maule was not alone in wishing to restrict the scope of women's power in the church; indeed, some were flatly opposed to it. One notorious opponent, Francis Bugg, expressed his views on the matter in verse:

> Take heed, beware of Novelty
> And of female authority...
> But rather take the good old way
> As God commanded: Paul doth say
> That women in subjection be,
> And not usurp authority,

Nor in the church permitted speak,
Whereby they should good order break,
Except to pray and prophesy
By power given from on high.[23]

This kind of interpretation of 1 Cor 14:34,35 rests upon the assumption that in some practical spheres (though not in spiritual ones) women are weaker than men and consequently stand in need of male guidance and protection. If this premise is accepted, then the command to women to keep silent and learn of their husbands is entirely reasonable: it would be a command "necessary enough for that simple and weak sex", as Bunyan put it.[24] The early Quakers subverted this point, however, by claiming that weakness was a prerequisite for being used by God: "mark this, ye despisers of the weakness of women, and look upon yourselves to be so wise: but Christ Jesus doth not so, for he makes use of the weak... the weakness of God is stronger than men, and the foolishness of God is wiser than men."[25] The prevailing seventeenth-century view that women were weaker and more foolish than men was to be found in early Quakerism, but it did not disqualify women from preaching. Some later Quakers felt that it disqualified women from an active role in church government, however.

Were there, then, other methods of interpreting 1 Cor 14:34,35 which did not rely in some way on a denigratory understanding of women? It is possible that some were happy to view Christ as "husband", but found the idea of equating the "woman" with the flesh unsatisfactory; whether because it was uncongenial to their view of women, or simply because it was too fanciful. It is evident that the early Quakers believed there to be acceptable and unacceptable uses of allegory, and they appeared to have certain rules to guide them in this matter.[26]

Fox, for example, rejected the Ranters' contention that the "woman that Paul speaks of that is forbidden to speak in the church, but must learn of her husband at home, is the whore that drinks the blood of the saints in Revelation". Fox provided his own interpretation of Paul's words which refused to allegorise "the woman who must be silent" in any way. Not only was it incorrect, in Fox's opinion, to identify the woman with "the whore" in Revelations, but also, it would seem, to find in the words a reference to an unregenerate principle in the unredeemed heart:

> This is false, for the woman the apostle speaks of there, that must learn in silence, and must be in subjection, and ask her husband at home, is in the state of Eve, who must not teach, but learn in silence, as also said the Law, for she was the first in transgression. Now the women here hath a husband to ask at home, and she is not to usurp the authority over the man; but Christ in the male as in the female who redeems from under the law, and makes free from the law, may speak, Christ in the male and female who are in the Spirit of God, who are not under the law.[27]

Fox mingles references to 1 Cor 14:34,35 with others from 1 Tim 2:11-15, and again, his appeal is to the difference in status between those who are "under the law" and those who are "in the Spirit of God". Christ "in the male and female who are in the Spirit of God, may speak", since Christ had redeemed them "from under the law". Rather than suggesting that the woman who is to be silent stands for all people who are still under the law, Fox states that the apostle is referring to the woman who "is in the state of Eve". Fox appears to be saying that the commands to silence and subjection to the husband, (here literally the human husband, not Christ), while not binding on women in the restoration, were nonetheless appropriate to women who were still in the state of the fall, or the state of Eve. At this point it will be useful to focus attention on 1 Tim 2:11-15.

1 Tim 2:11-14

This passage raises again the issue of women keeping silent, and in addition stresses that women should not teach, or "usurp authority" over the man. This is based on the theological observation that Adam was formed before Eve, and Eve was deceived and "in the transgression". The early Quakers dealt with this passage in several ways, often conflating it with 1 Cor 14:34,35. In the Authorised Version it appears as follows: "[11]let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. [12]But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence. [13]For Adam was first formed, then Eve. [14]And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression."

Teaching and "Usurping authority"

Teaching by women and "usurping authority over the man" were not necessarily synonymous in early Quaker thought. Opinions varied amongst the early Quakers as to what was meant by usurping authority. By the close of the Seventeenth Century some Quakers were taking a more reactionary line on this issue.[25] Others made the assumption that an *unregenerate* woman who spoke or taught was usurping authority. This interpretation persisted, and was to be found coexisting with more conservative views in the 1680s:

> So it's clear it's not the woman that's filled with the Holy Spirit, in whom Christ dwells, rules and is head that's forbidden to speak in the church; but such as are silly women that are ever learning, but never come to the knowledge of Christ the truth, that's not taught by him, nor led by him, such as obey him not; so usurps an authority, speaks their own words, speaks of themselves, not from Christ... In the congregation they are to be silent, and learn

subjection, it's a shame for such to usurp authority and speak.[29] The writer, Thomas Camm, resists any urge to treat "the woman who is to be silent" allegorically. It was clear to him that "silly women" who are not taught of Christ and who do not obey him should have no public role in the congregation.[30] The same restrictions applied to men as well: "neither man nor woman is to speak their own words, for every woman or man either that speaks their own words, are forbidden to speak in the church, in the congregation."[31] A similar attitude to the meaning of usurping authority had been taken nearly thirty years earlier by Francis Howgill:

> For it is one thing to have authority, and another thing to usurp authority. Now they that come to hear the power of God, and thereby are moved to speak, the power gives her authority, and she that is not in the power neither doth feel the motion of the Spirit, such one usurps authority and is unlearned, and such and they only were prohibited by Paul and no other.[32]

Here as elsewhere it was the woman who was not in the Spirit, or the woman still under the law or in the fall, who was not to speak in the church. As we have seen already, both men and women in the fallen state were to be silent. Did the early Quakers nonetheless see some special significance in the command to women to be silent? This appears to have been the case. In the previous section we saw George Fox stating that the woman who was to be in silence was "in the state of Eve", and this is the heart of the issue, since Fox says elsewhere:

> Now for a woman to preach or teach, such a sermon as Eve taught Adam, such a sermon as she had from the serpent, that drew herself, and Adam her husband, from God's teaching; here in this teaching, she usurped authority over the man; and therefore God set man to rule over the woman; but they were meet-helps before while they were under God's teaching.[33]

This passage is particularly significant, because it reveals that Fox saw Eve as usurping *God's* authority over Adam, not Adam's authority over

her. Man's authority over woman was a consequence of woman's usurping of God's authority, as is made clear by the words "and therefore God set man to rule over the woman". Before this, man and woman were "meet-helps", both being under "God's teaching". In the restoration man and woman were again under God's teaching, and male rule, which was part of the fall, was at an end. Those who were not yet under God's teaching, both men and women, were to be silent; but women in particular, who might preach "such a sermon as [Eve] had from the serpent, that drew herself and Adam her husband from God's teaching".

The command to women to be silent was linked by Fox in this instance to the fall narrative. Indeed, it would have been difficult for him not to argue from Genesis, since the writer of 1 Tim 2 does so. Eve "usurped authority over the man" by teaching him what she had learned from the serpent. She must therefore be silent and refrain from teaching, since God had set the man to rule over her as a result of this act. John Bunyan argued in a similar way from the woman's "usurpation" to the command to her to be silent, although there are significant differences in his understanding of the material. In his eyes Eve's usurpation lay in her undertaking to reason with the serpent:

> This therefore I reckon a great fault in woman, an usurpation, to undertake so mighty an adversary, when she was not the principal that was concerned therein; nay, when her husband who was more able than she, was at hand, to whom also the law [i.e. not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil] was given as chief. But for this act, I think it is, that they are now commanded silence... Women, therefore, whenever they would perk it, or lord it over their husbands, ought to remember, that both by creation and transgression they are made to be in subjection to their own husbands. This conclusion makes Paul himself: 'Let (saith he) the woman learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence; for Adam was first formed, then Eve; and Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived, was in the transgression.'[34]

The most important difference between Bunyan and Fox here is that for Bunyan, the woman's silence and subjection were rooted both in the creation and in the transgression, and were not consequently abolished in Christ. It is also apparent that Bunyan saw Eve as usurping Adam's authority, not God's. For the early Quakers, however, all authority was Christ's, and "may not Christ speak through the woman, when he is head over all?" "Is Christ's power and the Spirit's authority any whit less efficacious or powerful when he speaks in the female?"[35]

There remained a further method of interpreting this passage, and it may be found well expressed in Margaret Fell's *Women's Speaking Justified*:

> Here the apostle speaks particularly to a woman in relation to her husband, to be in subjection to him, and not to teach, nor usurp authority over him, and therefore he mentions Adam and Eve; but let it be strained to the utmost, as the opposers of women's speaking would have it, that is, that they should not preach or speak in the church, of which there is nothing here.[36]

Fell's conclusion after studying the passage was that the writer was speaking of the marriage relationship rather than of the behaviour of women in the church. She appears on the surface to imply that whereas godly women were permitted to speak, it is at the same time appropriate for them to be in subjection to their husbands, and not teach or usurp authority over them. However, her next sentence draws the reader's attention to the fact that the apostle

> is speaking to such as he is teaching to wear their apparel, what to wear, and what not to wear; such as were not come to wear modest apparel, and such as were not come to shamefastness and sobriety, but he was exhorting them from broidered hair, gold and pearls, and costly array; and such were not to usurp authority over the man, but to learn in silence with all subjection, as it becometh women professing godliness and good works.[37]

The suggestion here is almost certainly that it is only the ungodly

woman who must be in silence and subjection to her husband, and not usurp authority over him. If this is the case, then Fell's attack on her opponents is double-edged: not only is the apostle referring to marriage rather than the church when he commands women to be silent, but even in marriage it is only *ungodly* women that are to be silent and submit to their husbands. She sums up her argument by an appeal for these verses to be understood within the context of the situation for which they were written:

> And what is all this to such as have the power and Spirit of the Lord Jesus poured upon them, and have the message of the Lord Jesus given unto them? must they not speak the word of the Lord because of these undecent and unreverent women that the Apostle speaks of, and to, in these two Scriptures? [i.e., 1 Tim. 2:11-15 and 1 Cor. 11:3-15] And how are the men of this generation blinded, that bring these Scriptures, and pervert the Apostle's words, and corrupt his intent in speaking of them? and by these Scriptures, endeavour to stop the message and and word of the Lord God in women, by condemning and despising of them.[38]

Generally speaking, the first Quakers were happy to accept that the restrictions on women's speaking applied only to women who were still in the fall or under the law. A woman in this state who taught or spoke was guilty of usurping authority (i.e. God's authority) over the man, as Eve did when she taught Adam what the serpent had told her. For most Quakers the idea of women speaking was not a problem, although some towards the end of the century had reservations about women teaching. These wished to distinguish between prophesying, which was acceptable, and teaching, which was "usurping authority" (see note 28). Still others felt that for women to have separate meetings for business, especially the business of overseeing marriages, constituted a usurping of authority over the men. This was countered at one stage by William Loddington:

> Women Friends meeting by themselves, may without the least suspicion

> of usurping authority over the men, confer and reason together, how to serve truth in their places, in such things as are suitable for them, still submitting to the wisdom of God in the men's meeting.[39]

Women's meetings did not usurp authority, argued Loddington, because they submitted "to the wisdom of God in the men's meeting". This drawing back from the egalitarianism of the earliest Quakers must be seen in the context of the fierce and bitter controversy over the power being bestowed on women by establishing separate business meetings for them. One opponent asked:

> Can there be greater imposters in the world, than those that judge all people, not to be of God, for not submitting to a female government in marriage? A thing not heard of, but of late years, except the government of the Amazons, who were not so censorious upon the account of marriage... But if you now say to me, as G[eorge] F[ox] said unto me... You do not deserve to have wives, (saith he) you speak so much against women. To say the truth, this was the best argument he could give us, for his unscriptural female government.[40]

It is easy to see how this kind of argument may have forced some advocates of women's meetings into a more conservative stance on women's role in the church.

"The Woman was First in the Transgression"

It now remains to be asked what kind of theological implications the early Quakers saw in the words "for Adam was first formed, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression". As we have seen, the priority of Adam's creation held no special significance for the Quakers. They tended to rely more heavily on the Priestly account, which spoke of male and female being created in the image of God (see Chapters 1 and 4 above). The fact that Eve was the first to transgrees, however, was not without consequences in early Quaker thought. The previous section shows the command to

women to keep silent being linked with Eve's disobedience by some writers, in that women who were still in Eve's state should not speak in the church. In the New Covenant the consequences of Eve's sin were dealt with, as were the consequences of Adam's. Christ the Second Adam undid the work of the first Adam and brought about reconciliation with God. This, on the whole, was the dominant understanding of the fall and restoration in early Quaker thought. There are, however, certain occasions when the Quakers argued for a special role for women in the process of restoration which counterbalanced Eve's significant role in the fall. These appear to be in answer to those who wished to argue that Eve's disobedience had a lasting significance which was binding on all women in the New Covenant as in the Old. They may also be read as a gloss on the words of 1 Tim 2:14. This feature of early Quaker thought about the place of women in the scheme of salvation has been mentioned above, (see Chapter 4), and will now be examined in more detail.

Although this argument is usually found in the context of a defence of women's speaking, (partly because 1 Tim bases the prohibition on women's speaking on Eve's transgression), it inevitably had wider implications for women's role in the restoration. Dorcas Dole's argument in favour of women's preaching ran thus:

> when [Mary Magdalene] asked for her Lord, in the resurrection of life and power he appeared to her, and endued her with wisdom and power, and sent her to preach the resurrection to his disciples; for if Christ send us in a message, whether the words be few or many it is preaching the everlasting Gospel, whether it be male or female, they are all one in Christ; for as the woman fell first into transgression, so in the resurrection Christ first appeared unto her, and sent her to declare unto the men that he was risen.[41]

The consequences of Eve's being first in the transgression were done away with by the work of Christ. No longer was woman to remain in

silence under male rule. Dole gives this a practical significance by a two-fold claim: that the risen Lord appeared first to a woman, and not a man; and also that he commissioned her to "declare unto the men that he was risen". This commission was accompanied by the enduing of the woman with wisdom and power -- possibly to signify that the two main characteristics that were held to bar women from offices of authority (folly and weakness) were no longer relevant in the restoration. The fact that women were the first to preach Christ's resurrection was not lost on George Fox either, who drew similar conclusions about its significance: "the woman indeed (namely, Eve) was first in the transgression; and so they were women that first preached the resurrection of Christ Jesus."[42]

Fox, on another occasion, examines this question more closely:

> And now you women, though you have been under the reproach, because Eve was first in transgression; but the promise was, the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head, that led her first in transgression, and the man also; and this promise of God is fulfilled, a virgin should have a child, and they should call his name Emmanuel, God with us again: for man and woman was drove from God out of paradise, and the serpent became their head, and god of the world; but Christ is come according to the promise of God and his prophets, who was born of a virgin... Now here comes the reproach to be taken off from women, who were first in transgression, and which are not suffered to speak in the church; but here [i.e. in the Magnificat] Mary did speak and believe that which was spoken to her; and also the reproach and transgression taken off man, that believes in the seed Christ Jesus... So that Christ Jesus may be head in all men and women.[43]

Here the link between Eve's sin and the command to women to keep silent is made specific, as is the redeeming work of Christ in releasing women and men from the fall: "here comes the reproach to be taken off from women, who were first in transgression, and which are not suffered to speak in the church". This passage goes further than Dole's, however, since it explores the role of women in the fall and in the process of

salvation, as well as the work of women in the restoration. Fox admits that there is a "reproach" on women because "Eve was first in transgression", and that the result of this disobedience was the expulsion of Adam and Eve from paradise, alienation from God, and bondage to the serpent who "became their head and god of the world". This was not a state completely bereft of hope, though; because "the promise was, the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head". This treatment of Gen 3:15 as a prophecy of Christ is typical of the early Quakers, and references to Christ as the "seed of the woman which bruises the serpent's head" abound in their writings. This image was an important one, speaking as it did of Christ's work of defeating the devil, and the role of the woman in bearing the seed which would bruise the serpent's head took on a special significance in the minds of several early Quakers. "Christ is come according to the promise of God and his prophets, who was born of a virgin... Now here comes the reproach to be taken off from women..." Fox's aim here is not to venerate Mary, for although she bore Christ, she also appeared in this context as a representative of the new woman in Christ who is no longer commanded to be silent, but may speak, since she had believed that which was spoken to her. The part played by woman in the restoration signified that her role in the fall was undone by Christ, and that the command to her to be silent no longer held (and possibly by implication that her subjection to her husband was ended). The status of all women in Christ was raised to one of equality with men. Man as well as woman had shared in the "reproach and transgression", and the reproach was equally taken off man by Christ, who became "head in all men and women".

A very similar line was taken by Elizabeth Bathurst who gave

clearer expression to these ideas:

> Although the woman was first in the transgression which brought in death; yet was she made by the power of the Lord, to bring in him who is the resurrection and the life. For this was the promise of the Father, that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head, Gen. 3:15. And it is long since fulfilled: for in the fulness of time Christ came, being born of a woman, to wit, the virgin Mary, as is written, Matt. 1:23. *So that it may be said, As by woman came in the transgression and degeneration; so by woman also came in the reconciliation and restoration, to wit, Christ, who came of the woman's seed* [my italics]; He it is, who is the healer of our breaches, and restorer of our paths: and in him male and female are all made one, as saith the apostle, Gal. 3:28.[44]

The portion in italics is the heart of Bathurst's argument. It has clear echoes of 1 Cor 15:21,22 and Romans 5:12,17-19, working as a parallel to the idea of Christ the Second Adam undoing the transgression of the first Adam. Mary becomes here a second Eve: by her "reconciliation and restoration" enter the world, just as by Eve "transgression and degeneration" had entered.[45] Bathurst is careful to avoid the impression that she is attributing a direct soteriological function to Mary, since she goes on swiftly to say "he [Christ] it is, who is the healer of our breaches, and restorer of our paths".

Eph 5:21-33

Headship

This was not an easy passage for the first Quakers to incorporate into their understanding of the role of women restored in Christ. Its unambiguous assertion that "the husband is head of the wife, even as Christ is head of the church" appears to place man as an intermediary between Christ and woman in the church, as does the command "wives submit yourselves unto your husbands, *as unto the Lord*". Some writers adopting a conservative stance on women in the church made use

of this passage to defend Quakerism from charges of disorderly behaviour:

> Neither doth the light... teach them to... subvert the rule of duty between masters and servants, between husbands and wives, between parents and children...
>
> Husbands therein walking, will love their wives as their own body; for he that loveth his wife, loveth himself.
>
> Wives therein walking, will submit themselves unto their husbands, and to be subject, as it is comely in the Lord...[45]

Another writer became concerned that "the rules and instructions given by the holy Apostle [were] not being kept", and that "confusion and destruction" were the result. Therefore he says that "women ... must not teach and usurp authority over the men, but be in subjection in all things, for the man is head of the woman as Christ is head of the church."[47]

George Fox was clearly uncomfortable with this passage. In his tract *The Woman Learning in Silence*, (1656), Fox quotes at length from Ephesians 5 (see above, Chapter 4). His words are confusing, but he may well be saying that when Paul speaks of husbands and wives he is referring *only* to Christ and the church, and not to human marriage. Those who wished to use the passage to restrict women's ministry were guilty of "wresting" his meaning. Fox's explanation is ambiguous, however, and has led some scholars to believe that Fox advocated the submission of wives to husbands.[48] A wider reading of Fox suggests that this cannot be the case. What seems to be happening here is that Fox found the imagery of Christ as head and husband of the church extremely useful, but at the same time wished to empty the other half of the metaphor of any practical significance. This may be seen clearly on another occasion, when he says "now the woman, (which is the church) must be subject to her husband in all things. Jesus Christ is the

husband; in everything she must be subject to him."[49] This was a tenuous position for Fox to hold. If man was no longer head of the woman in the restoration, then there was a danger that the image of Christ as head of the church would also be robbed of its significance.

Titus 2:3-5

Obedience

This passage contains an exhortation to older women to lead godly lives and to teach younger women "to be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed" (verse 5). In the early days of the Quaker movement when women as well as men were travelling in the ministry, denouncing towns and individuals for their apostasy and facing persecution and imprisonment, these words would not have exercised any great restraint on women's ministry. However, by the close of the century when a hard-won religious toleration had been achieved, the need for more circumspect behaviour was perceived, "that the word of God be not blasphemed". A concern for the conversion of the whole world to the Quaker message gave way to the need to survive as a holy "remnant" in a hostile environment. In this context the relevance of passages like that found in Titus became more apparent. William Edmondson quoted it in his description of the work of women in the church:

> the aged women... may teach the younger women to be sober, chaste, keepers at home, good, loving and obedient to their husbands, to love their children; that the word of God be not blasphemed. And again, young women may marry, guide the house, give no occasion to the adversary to speak reproachfully: (so here and in many other things) there is great service for the women as helpmeets, in adorning the Gospel of Christ Jesus, yet the easy part suitable to their temper, capacity and ability.[50]

Edmondson's concern was caused in part by his negative experience of women's ministry. He acknowledged that certain exceptional women may be called to travel in ministry, but he had observed cases where women had attempted this and failed:

> For I have known divers women of the younger sort, venturing on such services in travelling abroad, which have faltered and failed, and fallen into great temptations, and hurt themselves and others, and caused the blameless truth to suffer; whereas they might have been preserved and have been serviceable in their day, if they had stayed nearer home under succour, according to the instructions of the holy apostle.[51]

The need for younger women to be taught to be "keepers at home" and "obedient to their own husbands" was evident to Edmondson, who perceived many evils to have arisen from the neglect of these instructions. The whole tenor of this tract is conservative, and deeply concerned with establishing an order which would prevent opponents from speaking ill of Quakerism.

This concern was very real to the Quakers, as was their need to prove to those within the movement who opposed women's meetings that these meetings would not usurp authority over the men. In this context we find one of the very few occasions when George Fox exhorts women to obedience: "fifthly [they are] to be chaste, and keepers at home, and good, obedient to their husbands". This comes shortly after an explanation that man was set to rule over the woman because "she usurped authority over the man" by teaching Adam what she had learned from the serpent (see above, 254). "But" says Fox, "they were meet-helps before, while they were under God's teaching", (and are so again in the restoration in Christ, as he states on numerous other occasions).[52] What is to be made of Fox's use of Titus here? It would be slender grounds for claiming that Fox believed that women in Christ should obey

men in Christ, given what he says elsewhere. It would be possible to argue that Fox felt that submission of wives to husbands was still appropriate in the restoration, although the husband's rule (in the sense of domineering) over his wife was ended. Even if this is granted, it must be tempered by the fact that in another epistle Fox appears to advocate mutual obedience: "Sarah obeyed Abraham, and called him lord. Abraham did also obey the voice of his wife Sarah, in casting out the bondwoman and her son." This epistle stresses throughout that women have an equal share in the work of God, and equal responsibilities: "so women are to keep in the government of Christ, and to be obeyers of Christ; and women are to keep the comely order of the Gospel as well as men".[53] Another fact to be considered is that the Quakers made use of this passage from Titus positively, to demonstrate that women were given a teaching role in the church: the older women were to teach the younger women. This appears to me to be the reason why Fox quotes the passage. The assumption that he does not do so in order to exhort women to obedience is supported by the fact that he refers to the passage elsewhere and significantly omits the reference to obedience:

> So the elder women and mothers are to be teachers of good things, and to be teachers of the younger, and trainers up of them in virtue, in holiness, and godliness, and righteousness, in wisdom, and in the fear of the Lord, in the church of Christ."[54]

Similarly, an epistle by Anne Whitehead makes use of Titus without mentioning obedience of wives to husbands:

> Again, we being met together, the elder women to instruct the younger to all wholesome things, loving their own husbands and children, to be discreet, chaste, sober, keeping at home, that the word of God we profess be not blasphemed.[55]

This is even more striking than Fox's reference to Titus, since it is an accurate quotation of Titus 2:5 apart from the omission of the words

"obedient to their own husbands". Even if this omission was accidental, it cannot be without significance. We may reasonably conclude that Anne Whitehead either consciously or unconsciously felt it unnecessary to stress obedience.

1 Peter 3: 1-7

Submission

This passage, like that in Titus, exhorts women to be submissive to their husbands. The example of Sarah is given, who "obeyed Abraham, calling him lord." As we have seen, Fox countered this text with the observation that Abraham also obeyed Sarah, by casting out the bondwoman and her son. This is a curious comment by Fox, not because of its suggestion that Abraham was obedient to Sarah, but because it is difficult to resist the impression that Fox is here treating Peter as an opponent of women's ministry.[56] Peter cites the example of Sarah in order to exhort women to submission, and Fox counters this by referring to another aspect of the story of Sarah and Abraham; and he clearly finds this a legitimate use of Scripture. There are many occasions when Fox challenges his opponents use of biblical material, but this appears to be an occasion when he takes issue with one of the writers of Scripture. He does not say that Peter is wrong to use Sarah as an example of obedience, but his comment -- if it is accepted -- completely undermines the argument of 1 Peter 3: 1-6. This may simply be the result of carelessness, for those opposing women's meetings would certainly have made use of this material, and in his attempt to counter their arguments Fox may well have been betrayed into scoring an incautious point.

"The Weaker Vessel"

1 Peter 2:7 refers to the woman as the "weaker vessel". This was also the prevailing view in the Seventeenth Century, and the Quakers did not challenge it directly. What they did challenge was the notion that the greater weakness of the woman barred her from holding an office "in the truth". Such a claim was undermined by the Quakers insistence that weakness was a requirement rather than a hindrance in ministry, since the power and the work was God's. "The woman is counted the weaker vessel," wrote Richard Farnworth, "but the Lord filling that vessel full of his wisdom, and ruling it by his Holy Spirit... it is for the praise and glory of his grace."[57]

Women preachers had been accepted within Quakerism from the earliest days of the movement. Those preaching the message were not speaking their own words, rather it was Christ speaking in and through them. Problems arose, however, when women were given joint authority with men in certain aspects of church government. It appears that some felt that while "weakness" was no barrier to praying and prophesying, it rendered women unfit to hold authority in business meetings. A telling comment was made by Alexander Lawrence to someone opposing women's meetings: "we do not despise them because they are weaker vessels (though it may be that some of us have been of that mind with thee)."[58] Those defending women's meetings against the charge that women's weakness barred them from holding authority did so on the same grounds as those defending women's preaching earlier:

> And though we be looked upon as the weaker vessels, yet strong and powerful is God, whose strength is made perfect in weakness, he can make us good and bold, and valiant soldiers of Christ Jesus.[59]

Proof Texts for Women's Ministry

The last six sections have explored the different ways in which the early Quakers dealt with the biblical material which appeared to restrict women's ministry, or assign to them a subordinate role in church life. We now turn to those parts of the Scriptures which the Quakers used positively to demonstrate the biblical nature of their understanding of women's role.

Gal 3:28

All One in Christ Jesus

Gal 3:28 is the single most significant text used by the Quakers in their defence of women's ministry: "there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus". A good deal hinged upon their understanding of what it meant to be "in Christ Jesus". For them it spoke not of a future state in heaven, nor of a purely "spiritual" existence which had no practical implications for this life. Instead, life "in Christ Jesus" was to be experienced to the full in the present. Christ had undone the effects of the fall and in him women and men were restored back to God again, and were to enjoy all the blessings which had been known by Adam and Eve in Eden, and also to that higher state of Christ himself. Eventually the idea that the work of Christ in undoing the fall and defeating Satan was given expression in church structure by George Fox. His system of meetings was to be implemented without delay:

> And all they that deny the men's and women's meetings, in the new Covenant, in the restoration out of death and darkness, by Christ, and in his Gospel of light and life, they may as well deny the preaching of the Gospel, if people shall not come into possession of that which is preached, and practise it.[60]

The necessity of possessing what one professed was a constant theme of the early Quakers. Unless the egalitarianism implicit in the phrase "there is neither... male nor female, for ye are all one in Christ Jesus" was "possessed" and practised, then the Gospel itself was, in effect, being denied. "So I shall draw a conclusion," wrote Elizabeth Bathurst, "laying down this assertion, viz. That as male and female are made one in Christ Jesus, so women receive an office in the truth as well as men."[6] It is clear, then, that the early Quakers felt that Gal. 3:28 was the key to understanding the passages which commanded women to be in silence and submission. Their opponents, by contrast, felt that the equality indicated in this verse was to be tempered by the various restrictions placed on women elsewhere in the Scriptures.

The church, the early Quakers believed, was to reflect the truth that "in Christ" all were one, regardless of gender, race or social standing. Their problem lay in determining how the church was to do this. Did unity imply equality? Was there a proper differentiation of roles between men and women? All agreed that women in Christ might pray and prophesy as the men did; but George Fox went far beyond this in believing the Gospel demanded that the unity of men and women in Christ ought to be expressed in a system of women's business meetings. This came too close to advocating equality for many Quakers, and many opposed Fox, feeling that it permitted women too great a measure of authority. Others, as we have seen, supported Fox's move, but attempted to demonstrate that it was compatible with male headship and female submission, indicating that they too felt that for women to have equal authority with men was inappropriate. As a result of this kind of thinking there are tracts which contain appeals to Gal 3:28 in defence

of women's speaking, and at the same time, expressions of the need for women to be submissive or obedient.[62]

Another question which needed to be asked was to what extent the marriage relationship was affected by the restoration in Christ? George Fox stated unambiguously on several occasions that the man had only ruled over the woman since the fall, and that in Christ men and women were restored into the image of God again, where they were "meet helps" as they had been before they fell. This was his main argument for setting up women's meetings; and it is not possible that he was unaware of its implications for marriage as well. It seems reasonable to speculate that he was restrained from giving fuller expression to this idea by a combination of the opposition he faced over advocating even a limited authority for women, and the explicit biblical teaching on man as head of the woman as Christ is head of the church. When Fox admonished an opponent by saying "thy ruling over thy wife is in the fall", was he declaring that in Christ man is no longer head of woman? This is without doubt the tendency of his thought; but he may not have wished to go so far. He could instead be suggesting that male rule, in the sense of tyranny or domineering, was transformed by Christ into a gently exercised and humble authority, to which the woman could gladly submit. This is equally speculative, however; for Fox nowhere makes this plain. His overwhelming concern was for the submission of both men and women to Christ. On the subject of Sarah as a model of wifely obedience we have seen that Fox was unable to resist the observation that Abraham had also obeyed Sarah. Throughout his defences of women's meetings Fox may be seen repeatedly demonstrating that women as well as men were to "keep in the government of Christ", and his system leaves no

real place for the idea of a qualitatively different kind of discipleship for women:

> And women are to take up the cross daily, and follow Christ daily, as well as the men; and so to be taught of him their prophet, and fed of him their shepherd, and counselled of him their counsellor, and sanctified by him who offered up himself once for all. And there were older women in the truth, as well as elder men in the truth; and these teachers are to be teachers of good things; so they have an office as well as the men, for they have a stewardship, and must give an account of their stewardship to the Lord, as well as the men.[63]

Fox's argument has two major strengths. Firstly he focuses the debate about authority on Christ: Christ as prophet, shepherd, counsellor and offering. There is no room for male authority, for all authority is Christ's. The second strength is Fox's refusal to allow his vision for women in the church to be shaped solely by the New Testament material which speaks specifically of women's role. Instead he emphasises what all believers must do, whether they are male or female. All disciples must take up their cross, be taught of Christ, give an account of their stewardship to the Lord.[64] An understanding of woman's role which takes the commands specifically addressed to women as a starting point arrives at a significantly different picture of the woman in Christ. Instead of teaching and being a steward in God's work, she is to be silent and submissive. Fox's approach to Scripture posed a radical challenge this view. For him, the restoring work of Christ was the starting point:

> Now this old man, in Adam, in the fall being put off, and this man in the image of God, that he made and created them in put on in righteousness and holiness, in such Christ is all and in all, a ruler and a governor, so he rules in the male and in the female... 'For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature' Gal. vi 16. For the apostle saith, 'As many of you as have been baptised into Christ have put on Christ; there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female, for they are all one in Christ Jesus'.[65]

Scriptural Precedents for Women's Ministry

Another method employed by the early Quakers to defend women's ministry was that of heaping up biblical precedents for women's speaking or working for God. This technique was used on numerous occasions, and George Fox appears to have ransacked the Scriptures for examples of women prophets and workers. His selection of material was often with such a disregard for context that he provided his opponents with ample opportunity to dismiss his arguments, since some of the women he cited could clearly not be upheld as godly examples.[66] There is probably nothing to be gained by attempting to list all the women quoted as precedents for women's ministry, since the Quakers often did little more than draw the reader's attention to them, without offering much by way of comment. There are certain exceptions to this, however; in particular, the woman at the well, and the women who were first at the tomb.

The woman at the well (John 4:5-42) was used by the early Quakers as a paradigm for preaching. Thomas Camm held her up as an example in his tract *A Testimony to the Fulfilling the Promise of God*:

> It may be read how the woman of Samaria that discoursed with Christ at Jacob's well, went into the city of Sychar, and preached Christ to the men therein, and what an effectual sermon it was, though but short.[67]

George Keith made even more of this in a tract entitled *The Woman-Preacher of Samaria*, where the woman is contrasted to the ungodly preachers of the established church in Keith's day:

> Come hither all you men-preachers, of a man-made ministry... who cry out against women's preaching, and speaking, and say women ought not to preach... Oh for shame let alone your crying out against women preachers; while you are short, exceedingly short of this women-preacher of Samaria.[68]

Keith proceeds to explain the aspects of the woman's "sermon" which qualified her as a good example:

> First of all, she was taught by Christ, by Christ himself; she was taught immediately, and being thus taught, she believed on him, and then she went and preached him. This is an excellent pattern, and example unto all true ministers and preachers of Christ.[69]

Being "taught by Christ" was the basis for any proclamation of the word; and the early Quakers seem to have been particularly drawn to the woman at the well as an example because of the content of the teaching she received from Christ. It contained a key text to the Quakers' understanding of the nature of true worship: "but the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him" [John 4:23]. It also contained a clear declaration by Christ that he was the Messiah. This was significant to Margaret Fell:

> He was pleased to preach the everlasting Gospel to her; and when the woman said unto him, I know that when the Messiah cometh,... he will tell us all things; Jesus saith unto her, I that speak unto thee am he. This is more than ever he said in plain words to man or woman (that we read of) before he suffered.[70]

Christ's attitude to the woman, thought another writer, displayed the value he placed on women. Women were as capable of men of understanding the truth, if they listened to Christ's teaching:

> But Jesus saith unto her woman believe me, (so here you may see the mind of Christ was, that the woman should believe his doctrine that he spoke unto her... See what love and plainness he manifested unto this woman, not despising her, nor undervaluing her, in the least: but he spoke the plain everlasting truth unto her, and set up that worship of his own Spirit unto her there. which remains, and will remain forever, glorious praises to his holy name, for evermore.)[71]

The significance attached by the early Quakers to the preaching of Christ's resurrection by women has been noted above. The fact that women were first to preach the resurrection counterbalanced the fact

that the woman was the first to transgress. There is also the suggestion in their use of this material that the early Quakers saw the women at the tomb as examples of faith and trust in contrast to the disbelieving male disciples:

> And they remembered his words [i.e. that he would rise], and returned from the sepulchre, and told all these things unto the eleven, and to all the rest,... and their words seemed to them as idle tales, and they believed them not... So here the Lord Jesus Christ, sends his first message of his resurrection by women unto his own disciples: and they were faithful unto him, and did his message, and yet they could hardly be believed.
>
> And if these women had not thus, out of their tenderness and bowels of love, who had received mercy, and grace, and forgiveness of sins, and virtue, and healing from him; which many men also had received the like, if their hearts had not been so united and knit unto him in love, that they could not depart as the men did, but sat watching, and waiting, and weeping about the sepulchre until the time of his resurrection, and so were ready to carry his message, as is manifested; else how should his disciples have known, who were not there?[72]

Here the women are portrayed as more loving towards Christ in response to his care for them than the men who had "received the like". It was this which kept the women "watching, and waiting, and weeping about the sepulchre until the time of his resurrection", when the men had departed.

However, the women in this passage appear to have been used less as an example for both men and women to follow than as proof that the risen Lord sent messages by women. In this context these verses were very important to early Quaker women preachers. Faced with the rejection of their message simply because they were women, they may well have drawn strength from the fact that Mary Magdalene and the other women were also not believed. Certainly, the parallels between the two were noted on several occasions:

> Mary Magdalene, and the other Mary, were the first preachers of Christ's resurrection to the disciples, and the disciples could not

believe their message and testimony that they had come from Jesus, as some nowadays cannot; but they received the command, and being sent preached it.

'Tis manifest, that the first witnesses that were commissionated [sic]... to preach the resurrection of Christ Jesus, were women... Though yet it seemed to some (yea, of the disciples themselves...) as idle tales; as it seems to many in this age, because the resurrection is held forth and born testimony unto by women.[73]

It remains to be said that the biblical characters most obviously used as role models by Quaker women (as well as men) were the Old Testament prophets. This is to be seen in the style and content of their message. Their cries of woe, calls to repentance and warnings of coming judgment, accompanied as they sometimes were by prophetic acts, were drawn from the lives and messages of the prophets in Israel. One scholar notes this and asks why "the female leaders of a sexually egalitarian movement, speak with the voice of male biblical figures, and not those of Deborah or Esther or Miriam?"[74] The answer is not far to seek. Neither Miriam's nor Esther's "voice" was of much use to Quaker women speaking the message of God. The Bible contains only two lines spoken by Miriam, and the book of Esther makes no direct mention of God. The figure of Deborah, judge of Israel, however, may well be more important in Quakerism than is realised. It is in her song that the words "a mother in Israel" occur, and this phrase became highly significant to the self-image of Quaker women.

Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated the impact made by the dramatic experience of Christ revealed in the heart on the early Quaker understanding of what the Scriptures had to say about women. Christ was the one true head, husband and teacher, and all authority in the church

was his. He was the restorer, the second Adam whose life, death and resurrection undid the fall, defeated Satan, and restored the whole creation to perfection. Those who were in Christ were no longer in the fall. Christ was also the one in whom the Old Covenant found its fulfilment, and those who were living in his Spirit were no longer under the law. These themes permeated the thought of the early Quakers, and exercised considerable influence on their interpretation of those passages of the Bible which exhorted women to be in silence and subjection. The conclusions they drew were not uniform, however. In the early days of the movement the early Quakers were united in their defence of women's speaking, but they made their defence in different ways. Some demonstrated to their opponents that the woman who was to be silent was a symbol of "the flesh", while others claimed that it was only women who were still in the state of Eve (i.e. in the fall, and not in Christ) who were to remain silent. Some pointed out that elsewhere women were permitted to pray and prophesy with their heads covered, and challenged their opponents to explain this command if women were to be silent in the church.

New Testament verses which presented man as the head of woman, or which argued male superiority from the creation accounts were more difficult for the Quakers to explain. Some appear to have taken such verses on face value, only qualifying them by saying that in "spiritual" matters man had no authority over woman. That this kind of attitude is widespread may be deduced from the amount of opposition to the authority given women by Fox's system of women's meetings. In response to this opposition some adopted a conservative stance on women's position in the church, seeking to prove that women's meetings were consistent with male

headship and female subordination.

George Fox's writings represent the most thorough application of the effects of Christ's work to the issue of women in the church. By the time he was setting up women's meetings, Fox had reached the conclusion that in the restoration women and men were "helps-meet" again in the image of God, as they had been before they fell. For Fox there could be no place for male rule in the church of Christ. The tendency of Fox's thought was undoubtedly towards a rejection of the idea of male headship, but he was restrained from stating this directly by the New Testament passages which refer to man as the head of woman. Amongst the writings of the early Quakers, Fox's are the most thoroughly Christocentric. He repeatedly stresses Christ's role as head, husband and teacher, and appeals to the fact that those "in Christ" are no longer in the fall, or under the law. His further claim that the full implications of being in Christ were to be experienced in the present compelled him towards an understanding of the role of women that radically re-interpreted the New Testament material on female submission and obedience. This radical stance was never fully accepted in Quakerism, and various factors propelled the movement towards a more conservative attitude to women's place, as the following chapter shows. It must be stressed, on the other hand, that the Quakers' contribution to women's developing role in religious life was highly significant. The interpretation of biblical texts on women and silence as implying female inferiority was deeply rooted in seventeenth-century England. The Quakers' challenge to this assumption must not be underestimated.[75]

Endnotes

[1]Fox, *To all the Women's Meetings*, 39.

[2]Fox, *Journal*, 40. My italics.

[3]Fox, Epistle CCCXIII, (1674), in *Works*, Vol. 8: 66-73, 69.

[4]Fox, *A Testimony for God's Truth*, (1687), in *Works*, Vol. 6: 350-360, 356.

[5]This expression of inter-dependence of man and woman was taken by Fox as the highest and clearest expression of the Gospel contained in this passage. It is possible that it influenced his reading of Genesis, and that the idea that "man is not without woman, neither the woman without the man in the Lord" helped shape his understanding of man and woman as "meet-helps".

[6]This idea was a corollary of the early Quaker belief that no human authority, whether an individual or an institution, should come between Christ and the soul. See Chapter 4 above.

[7]Fox, Epistle XCIX, 103; Epistle CXXXI, in *Works*, Vol 7, 126-129, 127. Other Quakers also spoke of Christ as head of male and female, e.g. S. R., *A Tender Visitation*, 13.

[8]For a discussion of the development of the office of elder see Braithwaite, *Beginnings of Quakerism*, 140-144.

[9]Fox, *Journal*, 667.

[10]Anne Whitehead, *An Epistle for the True Love, Unity, and Order in the Church of Christ*, (London: Andrew Sowle, 1680[?]), 6. See also Mabel Brailsford, *Quaker Women, 1650-1690*, (London: Duckworth, 1915), 285-6, for similar statements.

[11]William Loddington, *The Good Order of Truth Justified, Wherein our Men's and Women's Meetings and Order of Marriages... are proved Agreeable to Scripture and Sound Reason*, (London: Andrew Sowle, 1685), 5.

[12]Fox, *Journal*, 667.

[13]Fell, *Women's Speaking Justified*, 8.

[14]Controversy surrounds the use of "*exousia*" in verse 10. This verse has been translated in a variety of ways, the Revised Standard Version having "veil", the New International Version and the New English Bible "a sign of authority", and the Today's English Version "a woman should have a covering over her head to show that she is under her husband's authority"(!) This kind of understanding has been challenged by Morna Hooker in her essay "Authority on her Head: an Examination of 1 Corinthians 11.10", *New Testament Studies* 10 (1964), 410-416, where Hooker suggests that *exousia* means authority, and the authority of the

woman in Christ to prophesy, rather than the authority of man over woman. At this point the Authorised Version's "a woman [ought] to have power on her head" is a more congenial translation than the modern renditions.

[15]Sarah Blackborow, *A Just and Equal Ballance discovered*, (London: M. W., 1660), 14.

[16]Camm, *Testimony*, 10; Maule, *Truth Held Forth*, 125.

[17]Farnworth, *Woman Forbidden to Speak*, 3; William Mather, *An Instrument from that Little Stone*, (London: Sarah Howkins, 1694), 2.

[18]Fox, *Epistle to all People*, 92.

[19]Fell, *Women's Speaking Justified*, 7,8.

[20]There is no way of discovering now who formulated these ideas in the first place, of course. Fell was convinced by Fox's message when he visited her family home, Swarthmoor, in 1652, and by the time Fox wrote his Epistle (see above, n18) the two had had ample time to discuss the issue. Fox's cruder style is probably owing to the fact that much of his work was dictated, rather than written, and the impression I gain from the material is that he quoted the Scriptures freely from memory, often passing from one text to another similar one and back again in the course of a sentence. We do not often find him attempting a detailed methodical analysis of a given passage, but this need not imply that his theological grasp of the message of the Scriptures was inferior to writers whose methods were more conventional.

[21]Camm, *Testimony*, 10; Maule, *Truth Held Forth*, 125.

[22]George Fox, "An Epistle to be Read in the Men's and Women's Meetings", in *Works*, vol. 7, 139-142, 140.

[23]Francis Bugg, *Innocency Vindicated and Envy Rebuked*, (no printer's name or place or date, but c1684?), 6. This extract is another conflation of 1 Cor 14:34,35 and 1 Tim 2:11,12. It is worth noting that those Quakers who objected to the authority given to women by Fox's system of Women's Meetings had no objection to women praying and prophesying. Spiritual power "given from on high" was one thing; temporal power over marriages was quite another. It seems to me that in any religious movement it is at the point where real power is perceived to reside -- whether that be at the altar, in the pulpit, or in the church meeting -- that women are most likely to be barred on grounds of their sex. What makes the early years of the Quaker movement extraordinary is that it was at precisely this point of power -- the prophetic declaration of Christ's coming -- that women were accepted on equal terms with men. By the end of the century the source of power in the group was located much more in the business meeting, and the resistance to Women's Meetings for business was considerable.

[24]Bunyan, *First Ten Chapters of Genesis*, 429.

[25]Fell, *Women's Speaking Justified*, 6, 7.

[26]Theese rules were not rigidly formulated, of course, but it seems to me that the early Quakers' use of allegory (discussed more fully above, Chap. 2), maintained a good deal of respect for the probable literal meaning of the text, although they may well have felt that the true significance of a given event or custom in the Scriptures was to be found summed up in Christ and his work.

[27]George Fox, *The Great Mistery of the Great Whore Unfolded*, (1659), in *Works*, Vol. 3, 453.

[28]One example of this may be found in Edmondson *Wholesome Advice*, where he says that "women inspired with the testimony of Jesus, may pray and prophesy;... but must not teach and usurp authority over the men, but be in subjection in all things", 17. Another can be seen in John Field's *Some Observations on the Remarks upon the Quakers, or the Busie Priest's Envy Detected*, (London: J. Sowle, 1700). Field allows that Christian women might bless God's name, confess to his goodness and pray or prophesy in the church. However, he goes on to say: "we are persuaded [the apostle] intended what he expressed, that [women] should learn in silence, with all subjection, and that a woman should not be suffered to teach nor usurp authority over the man; for that would be no good doctrine, for it would better become her to be in silence, with all subjection and learn of her husband." 10. Both these tracts are relatively late, Edmondson's appearing in 1701, and Field's in 1700. By this time many Quakers were withdrawing from their original radical stance on women's ministry, see Chap. 6 below.

[29]Camm, *Testimony*, 9. Camm, in this tract, aimed to prove women's "prophesying, teaching, preaching and praying through the operation of the Spirit of Christ, in the church, [lawful] by several plain Scripture testimonies and examples, out of both the Old and New Testaments", 1. Camm was slightly cautious about women's speaking, however; see his need to state that women should not raise questions "tending to strife", 10.

[30] "Silly women" here is a reference to 2 Tim 3:6,7: "[6]...silly women laden with sins, led away with divers lusts. [7]Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth."

[31]Camm, *Testimony*, 8.

[32]Francis Howgill, *One of Antichrist's Volunteers Defeated*, (London: Thomas Simmons, 1660), 20. Fox makes a similar point in his *To all the Men's and Women's Meetings Everywhere*, (1679) Epistle CCCLX, in *Works*, Vol. 8, 169-175: "And here you may see the apostle, who did forbid one sort of woman to be teachers, who were usurpers of authority, which both the law and the Gospel forbids; yet the law and Christ, and the apostles in the Gospel, encouraged the honourable women to preach and teach", 169. This is a reminder that Fox believed people in the time of the Old Dispensation could "see through" the types and shadows to Christ. Thus "honourable women" could preach and teach in the time of the law, since they were not under the law, but of the Spirit. For a discussion of law and Spirit, see Chap. 2 above.

[33]Fox, *An Encouragement to all the Faithful Women's Meetings*, (1676), Epistle CCCXX, in *Works*, Vol. 8, 92-116, 112. The idea that it was only unregenerate women who were to be silent was the main thrust of Fox's argument to the Duke of Holstein on the issue of women's speaking. Here Fox argues from some earlier verses in 1 Tim which discuss women's dress:

> Now, here the Duke may see, what sort of women were to be in silence and in subjection, whom the law commands to be silent, and not to usurp authority over the man, nor to speak in the church; these were unruly women. In the same chapter he commands women 'not to plait or broider their hair, nor to wear gold, pearls or costly array.' These things were forbidden by the Apostle; and such as wear such things, are to learn in silence and to be subject, and not to usurp authority over the man, for it is a shame for such to speak in the church.

"For the Duke of Holstein", Bicentenary ed. of Fox's *Journal*, Norman Penney, ed. 2 vols., (London: Friends' Tract Association, 1891), vol. 2, 404. See also Fell's *Women's Speaking Justified*, 9, which speaks in a similar way of women with "broidered hair, gold and pearls".

[34]Bunyan, *First Ten Chapters of Genesis*, 438.

[35]Livingstone, *Truth Owned*, 45; Howgill, *One of Antichrist's Volunteers*, 19.

[36]Fell, *Women's Speaking Justified*, 9.

[37]Ibid.. It remains possible that Fell did not intend to suggest that regenerate women were freed from the obligation to be in subjection to their husbands. Camm, writing much later, felt that "all that come to learn of Christ and his good Spirit, they learn meekness, humility and lowliness of mind, and such know how to honour their husbands, obey their husbands, and are thereby preserved out of the usurpation", *Testimony*, 17. Camm does concede that "God, by his Spirit, may make them instruments to instruct their husbands", ibid., but this would appear to be an exception to the rule. This area of early Quaker thought is confused. The extent to which they accepted that man qua man had some kind of authority or headship over woman is not clear. Man ruled over woman in the fall; Christ ruled over all in the restoration; but was the regenerate man still in some sense head of his regenerate wife?

[38]Fell, *Women's Speaking Justified*, 9.

[39]Loddington, *Good Order*, 5.

[40]Mather, *Novelty* 4, 10. It is interesting to note that Fox felt he detected an underlying misogyny in Mather's arguments, judging by his reported comment "you do not deserve to have wives, you speak so much against women." Clearly, Fox felt that Mather was not concerned primarily with the supposed unscriptural nature of women's "government" (and it is difficult to believe Fox advanced no Scriptural arguments), but with the outrage of submitting to some kind of Amazonian authority among Quaker women.

[41]Dole, *Once More a Warning*, 14.

[42]Fox, "Duke of Holstein", 404.

[43] Fox, *An Epistle to be Read in all the Men and Women's Meetings*, in *Works*, vol. 7, 139-142, 140-1.

[44]Bathurst, *Sayings of Women*, 24.

[45]This makes an interesting contrast to Penn's comments on the same subject: God restored men and women "by a nobler and more excellent Adam, promised to be born of a woman; that as by means of a woman the evil one had prevailed upon man, by a woman also He should come into the world who would prevail against him and bruise his head, and deliver man from his power." *Rise and Progress of the Quakers*, 17. Superficially the two passages appear very much alike, but Penn's account presents the woman in a more passive and marginal role.

[46]Roger Haydock, *A Hypocrite Unvailed and a Blasphemer made Manifest*, (no printer's name or place, 1677), 63.

[47]Edmondson, *Containing Wholesome Advice*, 17.

[48]See, for instance, Reay's interpretation of Fox's *The Woman Learning in Silence*, *Quakers and the English Revolution*, 26.

[49]Fox, Epistle LXXIX, in *Works*, Vol. 7, 88-91, 89. Burrough also found husband/wife imagery useful in connection with Christ and the Church: "Christ of whose flesh and bones she is, which is taken out of him, as Eve was of Adam". *Testimony Concerning the True Church*, 416.

[50]Edmondson, *Wholesome Advice*, 18, 19.

[51]Ibid., 20.

[52]Fox, Epistle CCCXX, 112, 113; *To all the Women's Meetings*, 39.

[53]Ibid., 40.

[54]Ibid., 41.

[55]Whitehead, *True Love, Unity, and Order*, 6, 7. Titus is also referred to in the tract by [?]Sarah Fell, quoted in Speizman and Kronick, "Quaker Woman's Declaration", 244. That this use of Titus (including the phrase "obedient to their own husbands") was prompted by opposition to women's meetings is obvious: "so here was women's meetings, and women's teachings, of one another, so that this is no new thing, as some raw unseasoned spirits would make it seem", [ibid.].

[56]Elizabeth Bathurst also makes use of this incident, although she is more circumspect in her comments, noting that "God commended her care, and justified her speech". *Sayings of Women*, 3.

[57]Farnworth, *Woman Forbidden to Speak*, 4.

[58]Alexander Lawrence, *An Answer to a Book by Richard Smith*, (no printer's name or place, 1677), 15.

[59][?]Sarah Fell, quoted in Speizman and Kronick, "Quaker Woman's Declaration", 245.

[60]Fox, *To all the Faithful*, Epistle CCCLX, 175.

[61]Bathurst, *Sayings of Women*, 23.

[62]See, for instance, Camm, *Testimony*, who describes how the Spirit teaches women how to love and obey their husbands, thereby preserving them "out of the usurpation", 17, but earlier says:

> here is the blessed restoration out of the fall, through Christ that's one in both male and female, both hath he purchased by an high price unto himself,,, here the Spirit utters itself through the male and female, for both are one in the Spirit of truth, both are one in Christ, as may be read in Gal. 3:27,28,,, Here is no difference in Christ, Christ may speak in male and female, who is it that will limit him in his church, may he not speak through the daughters and handmaidens that's filled with his Spirit, as well as through the sons and servants, being there is no difference, all are one in him?

8. See also Loddington, *Good Order*, 5.

[63]Fox, *To All the Women's Meetings*, 39.

[64]Thus Fox avoided what one scholar saw as the mistake made by other groups, i.e. the polarization of male/female roles "in such a way as to allow no human characteristics shared by both. Women in short, who did not confine themselves to the defined womanly role were regarded as behaving like men, not like Christians or even as human beings who share similar goals, regardless of gender." Ludlow, "Arise and be Doing", 28. Certainly the woman preacher at the centre of the Antinomian Crisis in America was told "you have rather bine a Husband than a Wife and Preacher than a Hearer; and a Magistrate than a Subject." Quoted in Koehler, "American Jezebels", 64.

[65]Fox, *Testimony for God's Truth*, 356-7.

[66]See William Rogers attack on Fox's use of Old Testament women as godly examples in *The Christian Quaker*, (1680), pt. 1, 62.

[67]Camm, *Testimony*, 6.

[68]Keith, *Woman-Preacher*, 1.

[69]Ibid., 2.

[70]Fell, *Women's Speaking Justified*, 5.

[71]?Sarah Fell, quoted in Speizman and Kronick, " Quaker Woman's Declaration", 239.

[72]Ibid., 240; Fell, *Women's Speaking Justified*, 7.

[73]George Fox, *To All the Women's Meetings*, 40; Isabel Yeamens, *An Invitation of Love to all who Hunger and Thirst after Righteousness*, (no printer's name or place, 1679), 4, 8. At least one earlier woman preacher drew on the resurrection accounts for justification of her ministry. Katherine Zell in the Sixteenth Century saw herself as "the dear Mary Magdalene, who with no thought of being an Apostle, came to tell the disciples she had encountered the living Lord." Quoted in Sherin Marshall Wyntjes, "Women in the Reformation Era", in Bridenthal and Koonz, eds., *Becoming Visible*, chap. 7, 165-189, 174.

[74]Mack, "Gender and Spirituality", 40.

[75]Greaves, "Ordination Controversy", 235.

CHAPTER 6

THE CHANGING ROLE OF WOMEN

IN SEVENTEENTH CENTURY ENGLISH QUAKERISM.

Introduction

This thesis has argued that it is in the eschatological beliefs of the early Friends that the explanation for their radical attitude towards the ministry of women must be sought. The disappearance of their eschatological framework had, therefore, far-reaching implications for their understanding of women's place and ministry.

As chapter 3 suggests, the Quakers did not consciously reject their early eschatology; rather they redefined their ideas in a way which allowed them to believe that they were adhering faithfully to their early doctrine and practice. A cursory glance at seventeenth-century Quakerism gives an impression of continuity of belief, but this is deceptive. The "light" had become the cornerstone of Quaker doctrine and experience by the close of the century; but by then the understanding of the light had changed. No longer did it signify the eschatological presence of Christ revealed in the heart to judge sin and restore men and women to God. Instead it had come to be viewed more as a divine spiritual principle working in all people and ages.

With the fading of their early vision came a dwindling of the early Quakers' sense of mission to the world. The nations no longer seemed as though they would soon be won by the message of Quakerism. Neither did the end of all things appear to be imminent. The Quakers became by degrees more inward looking, and the focus for missionary efforts became more local -- the immediate neighbourhood, and the

family. More attention was given to the correct ordering of servants and children. It was in the home that the radical challenge of early Quaker theology towards the place of women had had least impact, since the concept of the headship of husband over wife was never directly challenged. The narrowing of the mission field to the household had the effect of restricting the ministry and authority that the first Quaker women had enjoyed.

Evangelistic methods also changed. The dramatic prophetic acts which had so startled the nation disappeared, and the aggressive prophetic style of preaching was tempered by moves towards moderation. The aim was to persuade rather than denounce. This trend also brought about a gradual restriction of women's ministry, since it was in the role of enthusiastic prophet that Quaker women had first begun to emerge in significant numbers, wielding considerable spiritual authority.

This restriction was mitigated to some extent by the establishment of a system of separate business meetings for women, which had various areas of responsibility and authority. The setting up of these meetings was met by serious opposition, both on the grounds that they were a "novelty" but also because they were deemed by some to allow women too great a measure of authority. Some made use of the various biblical injunctions on women's speaking in church to demonstrate that women's meetings were unscriptural.

In the atmosphere of the early Quakers' eschatological beliefs with their themes of disruption, coming judgment and the imminent establishment of new heaven and a new earth, radical egalitarian ideas could flourish. The redefinition of Quakerism in terms of the universal divine principle, "the light", discouraged such new departures, since it

relied on a belief in the continuity of the light in all ages. It centred upon a rediscovery of the good old way, the true church re-established after the apostasy, but lacked any real sense that the church and the whole of creation was going somewhere or developing towards something.

This chapter seeks to show in some detail how the disappearance of fervent eschatological hopes affected the role of women in seventeenth-century English Quakerism.

Women and the Changing View of Prophecy.

In the early years of the Quaker movement prophecy was an integral part of the Quakers' eschatological convictions. This may be seen in their emphasis on the words of the prophet Joel quoted in Acts. These were central to the Quakers' understanding of prophecy for two reasons; firstly because they spoke of "the last days": "And it shall come to pass *in the last days*, saith God, I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and daughters shall prophesy", (Acts 2:17, my italics). For the first Quakers, the "last days" spoken of here referred specifically to the present hour, rather than signifying in a general sense the post-Pentecost era of the Church. The Spirit of prophecy poured out on sons and daughters was a sign of the end. It was accompanied by the appearance of "wonders in the heavens above, and signs in the earth beneath; blood, and fire, and vapour of smoke", which preceded "the great and notable day of the Lord", (Acts 2:19,20).

The second reason why this passage was significant for the Quakers was because it spoke of both sons and daughters prophesying. They appear to have viewed Acts 2:17 as far more than a means of

justifying women's speaking. For them the widespread practice of women prophesying was proof that the "last days" were come. It would not have been sufficient if "sons" alone had prophesied, nor if only the occasional "daughter" had done so. It was the appearance of large numbers of women speaking the things of God that was important, for it meant that the "great and notable day of the Lord" was at hand. Women's prophecy was therefore not simply tolerated amongst the early Quakers. Instead, it contributed to the Quakers' image of themselves as the true church in the last days, in whose midst the ancient prophecies were being fulfilled.

The content and style of early Quaker prophecy was governed by their eschatological concerns, since the function of prophecy was to challenge the hearer to repentance in the face of the coming judgment. The content consisted of cries of "woe" and warnings of retribution if the message was not heeded; and the style of preaching was direct and dramatic, designed to create a strong reaction in the hearers. Sometimes the spoken message was reinforced by some prophetic act, the wearing of sackcloth and ashes, for instance. This is borne out by contemporary accounts of those outside, as well as within, the Quaker movement. One writer, a hostile though usually accurate observer, gave the following description:

> Sometimes some of them, men or women, will more like frantic people than modest teachers of the Gospel, or like the prophets of Münster or John of Leyden's apostles, run through or stand in the streets or market place, or get upon a stone and cry, "Repent, repent, woe, woe, the judge of the world has come, Christ is in you all, believe not your priest of Baal, they are liars, they delude you."'

Despite some exaggerations, there is much that rings true in this account which can be substantiated from other sources. The last

accusation is supported by Richard Baxter, who complained that the Quakers' "principle zeal lieth in railing at the ministers as hirelings, deceivers, false prophets, etc.."[2] The dramatic appearance of Quaker prophets in the streets and market places is supported by the Quakers' own accounts of their preaching. George Fox recorded an incident which took place in 1649:

> The Lord's power was with the friendly sheriff, and wrought a mighty change in him, and great openings he had. The next market-day, being the seventh day of the week, as he was walking with me in the chamber, in his slippers, he said, 'I must go into the market and preach repentance to the people'; and accordingly he went, in his slippers, into the market, and into several streets, and preached repentance to the people, very many being wrought upon.[3]

This, then, was the voice of early Quakerism: a call to repentance before the great and terrible day of the Lord. It rested on the conviction that Christ was "come and coming" again, and that the end of all things was at hand. All the early Quakers were involved in the proclamation of this message, whether verbally in prophecy, or symbolically in their refusal to take oaths, pay tithes, or remove their hats before superiors. Both by their words and their actions the Quakers were attempting to bring people to a point of conviction, and from there to repentance and salvation. Their style was confrontational, usually evoking a strong response -- whether positive or negative -- in their hearers.

This style of proclamation changed during the course of the Seventeenth Century, however, (see Chap. 3, above). The dwindling of the Quakers' early vision of the end, and the brutal persecution of the '60s and '70s brought about a different attitude towards prophecy. The pressing need which had driven the earliest prophets disappeared as their vision of the coming judgment no longer seemed in the process of

being fulfilled. Persecution drove them into circumspection in the declaration of their message. Their tracts became increasingly apologetic in style, aiming to persuade rather than condemn their opponents. During the Interregnum the Quakers practised no internal censorship, but the first Yearly Meeting in 1672 appointed ten Quakers to oversee Quaker publications,[4] without whose permission no Quaker could could publish anything officially. At the same time warnings were issued against provocative speech and writing: "Avoid all imagined, unseasonable and untimely prophesyings"; "Take heed of aggravating reflections and forward clashing at persons or people, with unreasonably and rashly using names of distinctions".[5] By the time of the first Yearly Meeting of 1672, the Quakers had sensed that the kind of prophecy which had been exercised in the early years of the movement was ill-suited to a group struggling for long-term survival in a hostile world. The revelations of the individual were subjected increasingly to the guidance of the group, and the range of prophetic language and activity considered acceptable grew narrower as the Quakers' attitude towards evangelism became more cautious.

The diminishing of the role of the prophet in Quakerism, then, was a result of the dwindling of their early vision, combined with the pressures of severe persecution. The greatest effect was felt by those who had benefited most from the earlier understanding of prophecy. The Quakers' presupposition was that the prophet was the mouthpiece of God, speaking God's words directly as they were received. This, together with the great sense of urgency in the face of the imminent day of judgment, opened the role of prophet to those who had previously been barred from public proclamation of God's word: the uneducated, the poor,

the young, and women.[5] The content of the message, as we have seen, was governed entirely by the eschatological vision of the early Quakers; and the effect of underprivileged people, particularly women, assuming public roles was in keeping with the challenging and unsettling nature of the message. As one scholar suggests of women prophets from the Civil War period: "the combination of her despised status and her ecstatic, yet authoritative behaviour, made the female prophet a perfect symbol of the world turned upside down."[7] Women prophets were therefore appropriate vehicles for a message of crisis and judgment. Their appearance in public streets and market places was less desirable when the Quakers were wishing to demonstrate that their beliefs posed no threat to law and order.

The desire to prove that Quakerism was not undermining the structures of society did not result in a ban on women preaching. The view that the prophet was simply a channel for the divine message did not change; and this ensured that in theory, at least, anyone could speak the words given them by the Spirit, regardless of age, sex, or social standing. The practice of allowing women to speak publicly was therefore safeguarded in Quakerism.[8] Women could still proclaim God's words; but the Quakers' understanding of what God was saying, and the pressure on them to seek more conciliatory methods of declaring their message meant that the dramatic fiery women prophets of the early days of the movement gradually disappeared.

Travelling Women Preachers

Women travelled in ministry from the earliest days of the Quaker movement. It seems unlikely that their activity was in response to any

specific teaching which justified women's missionary journeys, rather that such ministries developed spontaneously in the atmosphere of intense eschatological expectation, and were later sanctioned by the movement. Of the group known as the "valiant sixty", twelve were women; and in the wider group of 211 early missionaries, the "first publishers of Truth", 33 were women.[9]

The early Quakers' conviction that the end of the age was dawning and judgment was at hand lessened the difficulty of flouting of social conventions. If God was about to create new heavens and a new earth, then the hostility of the present godless age was not a pressing concern. Thus the Quakers' eschatology had the effect of releasing people into ministry who otherwise would have been held back by social considerations. This was often coupled with an overpowering conversion experience in a meeting that was marked by "revivalist" manifestations; quaking, fainting, loud cries, and so on. In this atmosphere extraordinary and dramatic calls to preach flourished. As one Quaker woman said, "if God calls us, woe be to us, if we come not; and I question not, but he whom we love will make us not to count our lives dear unto ourselves for the sake of his name."[10]

The lives and missionary journeys of the early Quaker women prophets have been recounted elsewhere,[11] but some examples will be helpful here. Elizabeth Hooton (?1600-1672) was probably the first woman preacher of Quakerism. The wife of a yeoman, and a member of a Baptist congregation, she was convinced in 1642 when she heard Fox preaching, and began her own missionary journeys. Her call was such that she felt able to leave husband, home and children in order to spread the message of Quakerism. During the course of her ministry she

suffered many imprisonments, (in the Fen country, at York and at Lincoln); and later when she was "an old woman above three score years old" she travelled to New England, and was gaoled there. She and her fellow Quakers were banished, condemned to be

> driven out of their jurisdiction by men and horses armed with swords and staffs and weapons of war who went all along with us near two days journey in the wilderness, and there they left us towards the night amongst the great rivers and many wild beasts that useth to devour, and that night we lay in the woods without any victuals, but a few biscuits that we brought with us which we soaked in the water, so did the Lord help and deliver us and one carried another through the waters and we escaped their hands [to Rhode Island].[12]

After this Hooton returned to England, and finding her property had been seized because her son, also a Quaker, had refused to take an oath, she travelled to London to plead the King's intervention. Her campaign for justice involved following the King wherever he went and calling "the cry of the innocent regard". On one occasion she was ejected from the Court, and appears to have been unable to resist the opportunity to preach:

> I had pretty time to speak what the Lord gave me to speak, till a soldier came and took me away, and said, It was the King's Court, and I might not preach there. But I declared through both Courts as I went along, and they put me forth at the gates.[13]

She returned a second time to New England, having succeeded in procuring a license from Charles II to purchase land in any of the colonies. She was again imprisoned for preaching, and this time condemned to be whipped at the cart's tail through several New England towns. After being abandoned a second time in the wilderness, she escaped again to Rhode Island. With her daughter and another Quaker companion she returned eighty miles to collect her belongings, only to be rearrested and whipped through various towns. The journey between Boston and the haven of Rhode Island was repeated several times, each

time involving banishment, whipping and abandonment in the wilderness. On one occasion Hooton made the journey to Rhode Island, facing threats from both extreme cold weather and also from wolves.[14]

The renewal of the Conventicle Act in England in 1670 brought about a fresh wave of persecution of the Quakers. Elizabeth Hooton returned to London to work for the relief of prisoners, campaigning for justice and improvements in the prison system. In 1671 she set sail with various other Quakers for the West Indies, but this was to be her last journey, for she died and was buried in Jamaica. George Fox left this brief account of her death:

> Elizabeth Hooton is deceased at Jamaica. She was well upon the Sixth-day of the week and deceased the next day about the eleventh hour, in peace like a lamb. James Lancaster was by her and can give an account of what word she spoke and of her testimony concerning Truth.[15]

The tireless courage which characterised Elizabeth Hooton's ministry was by no means unique. The first Quaker missionaries in Oxford, Cambridge, London, and America were all women. Another woman successfully completed a journey to Turkey, and preached to the Sultan.[16] It must not be supposed that their sex protected them from the kind of harsh treatment that Quaker men received.[17] In 1654, two Quaker women travelled to Oxford to preach there. One of them, Elizabeth Fletcher, was a gentlewoman, and at this time only sixteen years old. Both young women were ill-treated by the students, and later whipped by the authorities for preaching in the churches, streets and colleges of the city.[18] In the following year Fletcher undertook a journey to Ireland alone to preach the Quaker message. She was later joined by another woman, and the two were imprisoned. After her release Fletcher went on to preach in Dublin and Cork. She died in 1658 aged

nineteen.

Similar hardship awaited the first Quaker preachers in Cambridge. Mary Fisher, a servant, arrived in Cambridge in 1653 with another woman, Elizabeth Williams. The following is an account of their activity and sufferings:

> Elizabeth Williams and Mary Fisher, the one about fifty, the other about thirty years of age, came from the North of England to Cambridge, and discoursing with some of the students of Sidney Sussex College concerning matters of religion, the scholars asked them, how many Gods there were? The women answered, But one God, and told them, they had many whom they made gods of, reproving their ignorance of the true God and his worship. Whereupon the scholars began to mock and deride them. The women beholding the froth and levity of their behaviour, told them they were antichrists, and that their college was a cage of unclean birds, and the synagogue of Satan... The Mayor... issued his warrant to the constable to whip them at the market cross till the blood ran down their bodies... The constancy and patience with which they expressed under this barbarous usage was astonishing to the beholders, for they endured the cruel torture without the least change of countenance, or appearance of uneasiness, and in the midst of their punishment sang and rejoiced, saying, The Lord be blessed, the Lord be praised, who hath thus honoured us, and strengthened us thus to suffer for his name's sake. After which they kneeled down, and, like the protomartyr Stephen, prayed God to forgive their persecutors, for they knew not what they had done.[19]

This passage serves as a good, albeit extreme, example of the ministry of early Quaker women. Fisher and Williams felt able not only to leave their homes in response to their sense of calling, but to undertake a long journey without the protection of men. This was a common pattern. Their style of preaching was also typical of early Quakerism. Undaunted by their lack of education and theological expertise, the women confronted the students. The two phrases they are quoted as using to describe the college: "a cage of unclean birds" and "the synagogue of Satan", are both taken from the Book of Revelation, and amount to an accusation of hypocrisy and apostasy. The phrase "synagogue of Satan" occurs twice (Rev 2:9 and 3:9) on both occasions in

connection with those who "say they are Jews, and are not". The "cage of unclean birds" is found in Rev 18:2: "And he cried mightily with a strong voice, saying, Babylon the Great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird". These allusions, coupled with the more explicit accusation of being "antichrists", would not have been lost on the undergraduates; and as was the case with much Quaker preaching, there was an immediate and hostile reaction. It seems likely that such preaching was particularly offensive to the hearers because it was delivered by women. Elizabeth Fletcher's and Elizabeth Leven's preaching in Oxford was belittled as "chatter[ing] and talk[ing] in their way of cant to the students".[20]

This kind of prophetic ministry, whether by men or by women, fell into disrepute in Quakerism as the early eschatological vision faded and the pressure of persecution increased. However, there is evidence to suggest that women travelling prophets were viewed with greater suspicion than their male colleagues. This is seen clearly in an epistle quoted above, which was written in 1701 by William Edmondson:

> And there is harder labour in this work, as travelling journeys to publish the doctrine of the kingdom of Christ, often attended with hardships of divers sorts, perils and temptations, which the hardy temper, capacity and ability of men is fitter to perform. But notwithstanding that the easier part of the work doth in general belong to the women, yet such faithful and approved women who are truly inspired and gifted for the service of the ministry, may, as the Lord moves, go forth and travel in the aforesaid service with the unity of the faithful elders and brethren...
>
> For I have known divers women of the younger sort, venturing on such services in travelling abroad, which have faltered and failed, and fallen into great temptations, and hurt themselves and others, and caused the blameless truth to suffer; whereas they might have been preserved and have been serviceable in their day, if they had stayed nearer home under succour, according to the instructions of the holy apostle.[21]

Several important points arise from this passage. The first rests upon the concept of women's greater "weakness". As we have seen, the Quakers never sought to deny that woman was the "weaker vessel". In the early days of the movement, however, this weakness was in no sense a barrier to ministry. God did not discriminate against the weak, as Margaret Fell was swift to point out: "God the father made no such difference in the first creation, nor never since between the male and the female, but always out of his mercy and loving kindness, had regard unto the weak... Mark this, ye despisers of the weakness of women, and look upon yourselves to be so wise; but Jesus Christ doth not so, for he makes use of the weak."[22] In the early days weakness was a precondition of ministry, since God "chooseth the weak things of this world, to confound the mighty... and the woman is counted the weaker vessel."[23] Edmondson, by contrast, regarded the woman's weakness as a disqualification from the "harder labour" of travelling in the ministry, apart from in certain exceptional circumstances. This, too, is significant. Women prophets were no longer a sign that the "last days" were at hand as the prophet Joel had foretold; rather they were an exception that proved the rule that "the easier part of the work doth in general belong to the women." Edmondson is quite clear which women were able to undertake the "sufferings, perils and temptations" that attended a travelling ministry: "faithful and approved women who are truly inspired and gifted for the service of the ministry." The approval of which he speaks is the that of the Quaker group, particularly the figures of authority within it, as the next sentence indicates: "[such women] may, as the Lord moves, go forth and travel... with the unity of the faithful elders and brethren."

Edmondson's epistle was written out of a concern that "the discipline of [Jerusalem's] inhabitants [i.e. the Quakers] may example all the world, all keeping their ranks and places, according to Gospel rites".[24] The disorderly behaviour of certain young women preachers had "caused the blameless truth to suffer". This, ostensibly, was Edmondson's reason for discouraging women in general from undertaking missionary ventures. However, it is possible to detect a current of prejudice against women in the changing attitudes to women's role within Quakerism.

Eschatology and Attitudes Towards Women

Eschatological beliefs produce an atmosphere in which radical attitudes and new departures in religious practice may flourish. This thesis has attempted to demonstrate that to a very great extent the amount of spiritual authority given to women in early Quakerism can be explained by the centrality of eschatology in the movement. The following section draws together some of the eschatological themes which have been explored in the course of this thesis in order to demonstrate how the beliefs of the first Quakers allowed them to set to one side the prevailing understanding of women and their role, and secondly to show how the disappearance of such themes affected women.

The Imminent End

The early Quakers' the conviction that the end of all things was at hand dominated their thinking. It rendered long-term plans and strategies meaningless. The present evil world with its social structures, conventions and problems was in the process of passing away;

therefore the Quakers needed to have little concern for the lasting consequences of the missionary and prophetic activities. Their future timescale was short, swallowed up in the dawning new age. In this context the implications of a mother leaving her family to travel in ministry were not seen as serious. Far more serious was a refusal to obey the call of God: "If God calls us, woe be to us, if we come not."[25] Temporal concerns were to give way if they came into conflict with the concerns of the coming kingdom.

As the Seventeenth Century wore on and the Day of the Lord did not dawn, the Quakers needed to re-assess their position. If the end was not about to occur, then the issue of correct ordering of the family became a more pressing concern. The relationships between masters/mistresses and servants, parents and children, husbands and wives were no longer overshadowed by the great and terrible day of the Lord. If the Quakers were to survive as a group in the hostile world then human institutions were no longer irrelevant. How was the role of women affected by this shift in emphasis?

The question of male headship had never been fully resolved in early Quakerism. Was it a feature of the fall, and therefore abrogated in Christ; or was it part of God's eternal plan? By the 1670's George Fox was claiming that man's *ruling* over woman was a feature of the fall, and consequently abrogated in Christ; but never went as far as saying that male headship was a type of Christ, and therefore fulfilled and abolished in the New Covenant, although on occasion he came extremely close to this, (see Chapter 5 above). Early Quaker eschatology enabled women prophets to sidestep the question of male headship. They were inspired and sent by Christ, the head and husband of his people, to

declare the judgment of God in the last days. In this context the authority of an earthly husband seemed an insignificant concern. Even women who did not exercise so obvious a public ministry were caught up in the eschatological fervour that marked early Quakerism (see above, 290). It seems clear that the view of man as head of the household still obtained in early Quakerism, but that his authority was suspended on occasion by the overwhelming sense of crisis and the dawning of the new age. Once this intensity had dwindled the prevailing understanding of the wider society on the roles of husbands and wives began to reassert itself. Although male *domineering* was at an end in Christ, according to Fox, the notion that it was fitting for godly women to submit to godly men still held good.

Disruption and Crisis as Images of God's Work

The belief that the end of all things was at hand brought with it new ways of viewing the work of God in the world. Images of order and harmony gave way to talk of crisis and judgment. Chaos and disorder acquired positive connotations, for their presence indicated that the final hour of judgment would not long be delayed. The political upheavals of the Civil War years were seen by one early Quaker writer as part of God's unfolding plan, and his views are almost certainly representative of the early movement:

> The Lord is about his great and wonderful work in thee, and all the wars and contentions in thee, O Land, hath but been a making way for this work of the Lord,... The Lord will overturn, overturn the nation, and will create new heavens and new earth, wherein shall dwell righteousness.[26]

In an atmosphere where "the Lord of heaven and earth is now turning the world upside down"[27] strange and unprecedented activity was entirely

appropriate: a respected Justice of the Peace might well be moved to preach repentance in the streets wearing his slippers; a young woman from a respectable background might by the same token be required by the Spirit to appear naked as a sign in the streets of Oxford (see above, 290, and below, 315, note 18).

In this context the women prophets of early Quakerism wielded considerable spiritual power, drawing as they did on imagery of chaos and the world turned upside down. After the decline of the early Quakers' eschatology, order and harmony became central to their understanding of God's work:

> This great work of reformation may go on, which Christ is working... all keeping their ranks and places, according to Gospel rites; husbands to their wives, and wives in due subjection to their husbands... all according to rules and instructions given by the holy apostle, which not being kept, hath made confusion and destruction...
>
> And now the Lord hath brought and is bringing the church out of the apostasy, into her ancient doctrine and discipline.[25]

This robbed women prophets of a rich source of imagery, thereby diminishing their understanding of themselves as handmaids of the Lord in a world turned upside down. The right of godly women to speak the words given them by the Lord was never rescinded, but by the close of the Seventeenth Century such speaking was within the constraints of the "ancient doctrine and discipline" of the Church.

The Dawning of the New Age.

For the earliest Quakers history was speeding to its final consummation. The new age was dawning, and they were experiencing its firstfruits. As we have seen, they conceived only of a short time scale, and this enabled them to live what they believed to be the life

of the new age in the present fallen world. In this context their early claims of perfection may be understood. Perfection for the early Quakers was essentially a spiritual experience. They believed that Christ had purged them not only from individual sinful acts, but that he had brought them into a higher state than that of Adam before the fall. The contrast between the Quakers' lifestyle and that of the apostate Christians around them was stark, since the new order was radically different from the age which was passing away. The traditions and practices of the established churches were being swept away by the fresh outpouring of the Spirit in the last days. Their understanding of perfection was not based on an ethical code, so much as on the conviction that they were living the life of the age to come here and now.

In this atmosphere radical attitudes to the nature and role of women were able to develop. The benefits won by the atoning work of Christ were to be known in the present. Women were no longer barred from ministry by their inherent weakness, since Christ's strength was made perfect in weakness. Nor was their lack of education a barrier, for it was knowledge imparted by the immediate revelation of Christ within that was significant. Any suggestion that women were by nature more prone to sin was also rendered meaningless by the Quakers' belief in personal perfection. In the Quaker movement women and men alike were living the life of the new age, despite the opposition and misunderstanding of the apostate churches around them.

This stance relied, however, on the conviction that the end would not long be delayed, that the present sinful age was about to be swallowed up in the glorious age to come. As the fulfilment of their

eschatological hopes did not occur, the Quakers were left with a mounting tension between the life of the new age and the present reality of the fallen world. Claims of personal perfection were gradually hedged around by qualifications. Their understanding of Christ's restoring work was subtly redefined as the restoration of the true church to its primitive perfection, rather than the imminent restoration of all things. The new age had already dawned in Christ's setting up of the new spiritual covenant. By the close of the Seventeenth Century the significance of the Quaker movement was seen to lie in the fact that in their midst primitive Christianity had been revived. This meant that the focus of Quakerism was no longer in the near future, on the dawning new age, and in the present where the first fruits were being enjoyed; but rather in the *past*, (on the New Testament Church), and the present where the practice of the true church was being restored in the Seventeenth Century.

This change in outlook had serious implications for women in Quakerism. A religious movement which looks into the past for its sense of identity is unlikely to be experimental and radical in its practice. There was increasing talk of the "good old way", of the church's "ancient doctrine and practice". Many of the radical elements of the early movement (e.g. dress, plain speech, refusal to take oaths) were retained, but were beginning to gather connotations of tradition. The feéling was that this was what Quakers had always believed and practised, as had all true believers before the apostasy. This change in atmosphere saw, I believe, a gradual reassertion of more traditional attitudes to women. These had never been wholly absent from Quaker

thought, but had nonetheless been largely overshadowed by the conviction that the new age was breaking into the present.

The Quaker Women's Meeting

The history of Quaker women's meetings has been explored in detail elsewhere.[29] This section seeks to examine the establishment of meetings for women in the context of the Quakers' changing eschatological views.

George Fox set about the business of establishing meetings for women in the early 1670's, a few years after his journeys to set up monthly meetings for men. His actions grew out of a response to the urgent need to strengthen a movement under threat from persecution outside and schism within. Such organisation was clearly necessary if the movement was to survive, but in terms of the eschatology of the early days, it was an ambiguous move.

How is the establishment of men's and women's meetings by Fox to be viewed? It is possible to regard them as a tacit acknowledgment that the final restoration of all things had been delayed, and that a new interim system of organization was therefore necessary. On the other hand, the kind of argument Fox advances in defence of these meetings makes it likely that he saw the new system as a declaration that Christ had come already; that the men's and women's were a visible outworking of the kingdom here on earth.[30]

In an epistle "to all the Women's Meetings, that are Believers in the Truth" (1672) Fox defended women's meetings in the following terms:

> For man and woman were helps meet in the image of God, and in righteousness and holiness, in the dominion, before they fell; but

> after the fall in the transgression, the man was to rule over his wife; but in the restoration by Christ, into the image of God, and his righteousness and holiness again, in that they are helps-meet, man and woman, as they were before the fall.[31]

This argument rests on the belief that believers were restored by Christ into pre-fall perfection *in the present*. The earliest Quakers believed that Christ had come again in the midst of his people, and that this indicated that his coming throughout the whole world would not long be delayed. Their personal restoration in Christ was a microcosm of the restoration of all things, (see above, Chapter 3). Early Quaker eschatology had, therefore, a realised and a shortly-to-be-realised aspect. The language that Fox employed in defending his new system of organization indicates that he viewed the establishment of men's and women's meetings throughout the world as the realisation of his eschatological hopes:

> Keep in the power of the Lord Jesus Christ his gospel... so that all the faithful men and women may in the Lord's power be stirred up in their inheritances of the same gospel, and to labour in it, helps meet in the restoration, as men and women was before the fall, in the garden of God; all are to work in his righteousness, and his image, in his power, in his garden to subdue the earth, and keep the dominion in his power, in the restoration, as man and woman did in the image of God before the fall.
>
> Women are to keep the comely order of the gospel, as well as men,... So the foundation of our women's meetings is Christ, to all them that be heirs of him, and his government. And the ground of our order of the women's meetings is the gospel, the power of God, which was before the Devil was; and all that be heirs of the gospel... I say, they are heirs of the comely order of the gospel; and therefore I say, take your possessions of it, and walk as becomes the gospel; and keep the comely order of it, and in it keep your meetings.[32]

Fox spoke of the men's and women's meetings in terms of an inheritance, urging the Quakers to take possession of it. It is clear from his linking of the meetings with Christ's restoring work that he views them as the fulfilment (or at least, a part of that fulfilment) of

his eschatological hopes. The believers were to take possession of their inheritance, to be "helps meet in the restoration", to "subdue the earth, and keep the dominion in [God's] power, as [they] did in the image of God before the fall." Fox did not view this system as a temporal or human order. It was the "gospel order", and its foundation was in Christ. The Quakers were to

> come to inherit and possess the joyful order of the joyful gospel, the comfortable order of the comfortable gospel, and the glorious order of the glorious gospel, and the everlasting order of the everlasting gospel -- the power of God which will last for ever and outlast all the orders of the devil and that which is of men or by men.[33]

This, then, was Fox's vision as he travelled the country "settling" the Quakers into orderly meetings. The gospel order, once fully established, would "last for ever and outlast all the orders of the devil and that which is of men". It is not clear whether Fox awaited any further revelation or fulfilment after the work of settling the meetings was complete. Even if, as seems possible, Fox was tending towards an over-realised eschatology, this does not exclude the possibility that other Quakers came gradually to view the organisational structure as an interim policy until the final consummation occurred. His talk of the "gospel order" lent itself very well to the idea that Quakerism was a essentially a return to the primitive Christianity known before the apostasy. It also emphasised the new understanding of God's work in terms of harmony rather than chaos. The Quakers were to enter the "everlasting *order* of the everlasting gospel". Crisis and change was giving place to order and continuity in their thinking.

Whatever the theological basis for establishing men's and women's meetings it is beyond doubt that Fox thereby ensured a lasting

and significant role for women in Quakerism. The gradual collapse of the early eschatological framework had the effect of narrowing and restricting the activity of Quaker women, (see above, 299-304). Although the women's meeting did not wield as much authority as the men's meeting, it nonetheless had considerable powers.[34] Indeed, many felt that it gave women too much power, particularly in granting them joint jurisdiction with the men's meeting over marriages. Without the establishment of women's meetings the indications are that the role of Quaker women would have dwindled to the right to speak in meetings (if properly inspired and approved), or the opportunity to travel in the ministry in certain exceptional circumstances. Even these restricted privileges, however, would have been striking in the context of the Seventeenth Century.

One of the ways in which the women's meeting helped secure a significant role for women was in its provision of a new set of imagery on which Quaker women could draw. We have seen how the image of women as prophets in a world turned upside down was no longer useful to the Quakers, and this was replaced by the image of women as "mothers in Israel". The following extract from Fox's writings describes this new role:

> And the elder women in the truth were not only called elders, but mothers. Now a mother in the church of Christ, and a mother in Israel, is one that gives suck, and nourishes, and feeds, and washes, and rules, and is a teacher, in the church, and in the Israel of God, and an admonisher, an instructor, an exhorter. So all that are come to that office, growth and stature, be diligent; for a mother in Israel, or in the church of Christ, is beyond all the mothers in Egypt, and in Sodom, and the mother of harlots, mystery Babylon... But the mothers in spiritual Israel, and the church of Christ, has the cup of salvation, and the breasts of consolation, which are full of the milk of the word, to suckle all the young ones, and to nourish, and instruct, admonish, and exhort, and rebuke all the contrary; and to refresh and cherish every tender

one.[35]

The role of "mother in Israel" had two important aspects: that of nurturing and caring for the needy, and that of authority. These elements were reflected in the kind of responsibility given to the women's meeting. They included on the one hand poor relief and the care of prisoners and their families; and on the other, the admonishing of women backsliders, authority over the correct ordering of marriages, and advice on the discipline of servants and children.[36]

Two things must be borne in mind if the scope of this image is to be fully appreciated. Firstly, it must be understood that the role of a seventeenth-century mother, when households were larger and to a great extent self-sufficient, was far broader than that of a mother of a modern nuclear family. Consequently the imagery of "nourishing, feeding and washing" those in need was more powerful. Secondly, it is vital to see the phrase "a mother in Israel" in its scriptural context. Fox was quoting from the song of the prophet Deborah in the book of Judges. Deborah "judged Israel" in the time when they were oppressed by the Canaanites under their captain Sisera. The "children of Israel came up to her for judgment", and under her guidance and prophecy the oppressor was overthrown, after which she sang a song which included the words: "in the days of Shamgar, the son of Anath, in the days of Jael, the highways were unoccupied, and the travellers walked through byways. The inhabitants of the villages ceased, they ceased in Israel, until that I Deborah arose, that I arose a mother in Israel," (Judges 5:6,7.). The choice of this phrase as a description of women's role in the church fills it with great authority, for Deborah was the leader of Israel at that time, spiritually as well as politically. The role of the mother

in Israel included the idea of spiritual power, judgment, and prophecy, and of ruling, as Fox noted.

Another important way in which the women's meeting benefited women was the opportunity it provided for them to meet together without men. The reason Fox gave for this was that "there are many things women may do, and speak of amongst women, which are not men's business".[37]

This idea was expanded by William Penn at a later date:

> Women, whose bashfulness will not permit them to say or do much as to church affairs before the men, when by themselves may exercise their gifts of wisdom and understanding, in a discreet care of their own sex, at least... There are divers things that seem peculiar to women, that were not fit for men, and in which men did, and would, find themselves often at a loss; which renders their distinct meetings farther convenient.[38]

The "bashfulness" of women may have resulted from the comparative lack of experience in business concerns, and their unfamiliarity with the wielding of authority. They would also have been seriously hampered by the sense that a woman's contributions were less highly valued than those of men. This bias was clearly revealed in the minutes of the Morning Meeting of ministers (male) of 1701:

> This meeting finding that it is a hurt to Truth for women Friends to take up too much time, as some do, in our public meetings, when several public and serviceable men Friends are present and are by them prevented in their serving, it's therefore advised that the women Friends be tenderly cautioned against taking up too much time in our mixed meetings.[39]

If this concern that women spoke too freely applied to meetings for worship, when theoretically all alike might be inspired to speak, it would have applied even more in business meetings. Most Quakers admitted that men had no authority over women spiritually, but many felt that in temporal concerns women were to be guided by the men. The establishment of separate meetings for women ensured that women's voices

could be heard and valued (amongst other women) on business matters. Although women did not share equally in church government with the men, they nonetheless had considerable control of certain matters. In the context of the late Seventeenth Century a joint business meeting for men and women may well have given women less scope and less authority in their ministry. The establishment of women's meetings must therefore be seen as a vital development for women in Quakerism. It safeguarded to a great extent the privileged position they had enjoyed in the early days at a time when the authority of women as prophets was dwindling.

Conclusion

The disintegration of the Quakers' early eschatological outlook resulted in a diminishing of women's role in the Quaker movement. The urgency of their belief that the end was at hand enabled them to lay to one side traditional understandings of woman's place in society and in the church. The idea of woman's greater weakness, while not rejected, was emptied of significance by the belief that the life of the new age (perfection) was to be lived in the present. The same may be said for male headship. Men were not to domineer over women in the church, but early Quakerism did not reach the point of saying that male headship was a type of Christ's headship and therefore obsolete in the New Covenant. Once the radical atmosphere of the early years had disappeared the traditional notions of women's weakness and subordination were able to reassert themselves. They had been kept at bay by the Quakers' eschatology rather than abolished by it.

With the changing understanding of the role of prophecy in the movement came a dwindling of the most important role open to women. A

woman's right to speak publicly was safeguarded by the Quakers' view of inspiration. All alike could by moved to speak the word of God, regardless of age, sex, or social standing. It was, however, the establishment of women's meetings by George Fox which did the most to ensure that women had a continuing role in Quakerism. They were to be "mothers in Israel", a title denoting the caring and nurturing role of women, but also their authority and power as prophets and judges. The meetings provided women with a context in which they could speak without being condemned for taking up valuable time that should have been given over to more important speakers (i.e. men). In later years the separation of the men's and women's meetings appeared increasingly to be an exclusion of women from the place where power was centred in Quakerism, the men's Yearly Meeting. This cannot have been Fox's intention, for men and women were to be "help's meet in the restoration". The question here is one of timescale -- how Fox would have structured his system of meetings if he had foreseen centuries rather than decades before the end of the age cannot be guessed. In the context of the Seventeenth Century the "venture... was a daring one",[40] and contributory cause of a major schism in the Quaker movement.

By the close of the Seventeenth Century the voice of Quakerism was no longer the voice of the prophet in the street proclaiming the coming judgment and calling people to repentance. The task of propagating the message of Quakerism was increasingly in the hands of educated people seeking to persuade opponents in an apologetic manner. The works of Penn and Barclay are examples of this. The power to speak authoritatively for Quakerism was concentrated in a much smaller group than at the start of the movement. Women were unlikely to make a mark

as apologetic theologians for Quakerism because of their comparative lack of education. Elizabeth Bathurst was a notable exception to this, but her lengthy theological treatise *Truth's Vindication* is now virtually unknown. Margaret Fell's theological works (save possibly her *Women's Speaking Justified*) have suffered a similar fate, perhaps in part as a result of the verdict passed on her writings by William Braithwaite's in *The Second Period of Quakerism*: "her writings, as a rule, have little force: it is as a mother in her home, and as a mother in Israel, that she holds her unique place in Quaker story".[41] This begs the question whether Margaret Fell's works have little force *because* she was a "mother in her home". The content of her doctrinal tracts alone cannot explain their lack of "force", neither can their style, for her works are usually more lucid than those of Fox, and her exegesis of biblical material is more careful.

The role of women in early Quakerism raises an interesting question: whether a freedom based on eschatological convictions can outlast the disintegration of these beliefs. It may be seen in the Quaker movement that the freedom granted women in the early days did not survive unchanged when the early vision faded. Radical ideals can flourish in a group if the time of eschatological fulfilment is believed to be imminent; but once this hope is disappointed and the group begins to plan for survival, then radical ideas are increasingly tempered. It is to George Fox's credit that he devised a system which both ensured the continuing existence of the movement, and also reflected (as far as was possible in the Seventeenth Century) his conviction that in Christ men and women were restored into the image of God to be "helps meet in the restoration, as they were before the fall."

Endnotes

[1]Higginson, *Irreligion of the Northern Quakers*, 71. See also Hubberthorne, *The Distance Between Flesh and Spirit*, (no date), in *Books and Writings*, 64-72, "and with the word of the Lord, as they are moved of the Lord, do many do many go now with this doctrine into your streets, into your markets, into your synagogues, into your cities, to call you to repentance, before the wrath of the Lord come upon you, and both sons and daughters now are sent to preach this doctrine among you from the Lord." 64.

[2]Baxter, *Life and Times*, 90.

[3]Fox, *Journal*, 41.

[4] For further details about Quaker printing and censorship, see Lloyd, *Quaker Social History*, Chapter 11, "The Quaker Press", 147-156.

[5]Epistle from the 1672 Yearly Meeting, quoted in Bauman, *Let Your Words be Few*, 93, 146.

[6]As we have seen (Chapter 5, above), one of the earliest defences of women's speaking rested on the view that it was not the woman speaking, but Christ, the man, speaking in her.

[7]Mack, "Women as Prophets", 25.

[8]This may be contrasted with the role of women ministers in Methodism, whose work was condoned by John Wesley on the grounds that it was effective; see Earl Kent Brown, *Women of Mr. Wesley's Methodism*, Studies in Women and Religion, Vol 11, (New York: Edwin Mellen Press, 1983), 26. This practice was banned at a later date.

[9]Ernest E. Taylor, *The Valiant Sixty*, 3rd. ed., (York: William Sessions, 1988), 39-40.

[10]Elizabeth Hooton, quoted in Emily Manners, "Elizabeth Hooton, First Quaker Woman Preacher, 1600-1672", *Journal of Friends Historical Society*, supp. 12 and 13, (1914), 21.

[11]See Brailsford, *Quaker Women*, for example; also biographies of individuals, e.g., Isabel Ross, *Margaret Fell, Mother of Quakerism*, (London: Longmans Green, 1949); Lucy V. Hodgkin, *A Quaker Saint of Cornwall: Loveday Hambly and Her Guests*, (London: Longmans Green, 1927); Lydia R. Rickman, "Esther Biddle and Her Mission to Louis XIV", *Journal Of Friends' Historical Society*, Vol XLVII (1955), 38-45.

[12]Source, Manners, "Elizabeth Hooton", 32. The religious toleration enjoyed at Rhode Island made it a haven for those persecuted for their religion.

[13]Quoted in Brailsford, *Quaker Women*, 30-31. Her behaviour here calls for parallels to be drawn with the importunate widow of Jesus' parable, (Luke 18: 1-8). It is possible that Hooton was consciously

modelling herself on the widow in the parable, for in a letter to the Lord Chamberlain on the subject of the loss of her goods she wrote:

> My heart's desire is, that you may do justice and judgment,,, and this is true nobility which is unchangeable and that man is noble in his place which will hear the cry of the innocent and help them in their distress but he that will not do it, comes short of the unjust judge, who though he neither feared God nor regarded man, yet did the widow justice, lest she should weary him,

Quoted in Manners, "Elizabeth Hooton", 61.

[14]Manners, "Elizabeth Hooton", 49.

[15]Fox, *Journal*, 611.

[16]See Braithwaite, *Second Period of Quakerism*, 271.

[17]Quaker women were exposed to sexual abuse, both verbal and physical, which would not have been inflicted on their male counterparts. See Besse, *Sufferings*, 57, where women in Bristol were called "ugly whores, bitches, jades and the like". Also B[illing], *Word of Reproof*, for an instance of a Quaker woman who was attacked by a "great boy... [who] did abuse her in such an unseemly manner, as with modesty cannot be expressed." 82.

[18]See Braithwaite, *Beginnings of Quakerism*, 158; and Brailsford, *Quaker Women*, 103. Their preaching was accompanied by a typical Quaker prophetic act: Elizabeth Fletcher appeared naked as a sign "against that hypocritical profession they then made there, being then Presbyterians and Independents, which profession she told them the Lord would strip them of," ibid..

[19]Besse, *Sufferings*, 84-5.

[20]Quoted in the typescript short biographies in Friends' House Library, London. Source: Croese, *History*, Part 1, 109.

[21]Edmondson, *Wholesome Advice*, 19, 20.

[22]Fell, *Women's Speaking Justified*, 5, 6.

[23]Farnworth, *Woman Forbidden to Speak*, 4.

[24]Edmondson, *Wholesome Advice*, 21.

[25]Manners, "Elizabeth Hooton", 21.

[26]Burrough, *Warning*, 12.

[27]Ibid..

[28]Edmondson, *Wholesome advice*, 21.

[29]See, for instance Braithwaite, *Second Period of Quakerism*, Chapter X, "Women's Meetings and Central Organization", 269-288; and Lloyd, *Quaker Social History*, Chapter VIII, "The Quaker Women's Meetings", 107-120.

[30]See Gwyn, "The Restoration of all Things", *Apocalypse of the Word* 200-202, for his description of Fox's aim in establishing men's and women's meetings. They were a "taking possession" of the Gospel inheritance, which amounted to the setting up of the Kingdom of God on earth. This was an interim system, however, if Gwyn is right that Fox distinguished it from the final consummation of history; see "The Final Fulfilment", ibid., 205-207.

[31]Fox, "To all the Women's Meetings", 39.

[32]Fox, "An Epistle to be Read in the Men's and Women's Meetings", 140; "To all the Women's Meetings", 40.

[33]Fox, quoted in Braithwaite, *Second Period of Quakerism*, 252.

[34]Braithwaite has an interesting passage in his *Second Period of Quakerism* on the subject of the respective powers of the men's and women's meetings, 273-4. He is divided between his desire to demonstrate that "the equality of men and women in spiritual privilege and responsibility has always been one of the glories of Quakerism" 270, and the need to admit that the women's meeting had limited authority. "It has sometimes been thought by hasty students of Quaker history," he wrote, "that the separate Women's Meetings were designed to give women some share in Church Government but not an equal share with the men. The was indeed the effect of their institution, but it is clear... that the question whether the women should be given less or more authority was not in [Fox's] mind. What he was concerned with was to give them their place, their right place, and to stir them up to take it." This does not, of course, face the question of what many seventeenth-century Quakers considered woman's "right place" to be.

[35]George Fox, "To all the Women's Meetings", 41.

[36]As Kuenning points out "lest these be thought peculiarly feminine functions, they were also the chief functions of men's meetings". "Christ's Wife", 9.

[37]Fox, "To all the Women's Meetings," 40.

[38]William Penn, "Just Measures in an Epistle of Peace and Love", (1692), *Select Works*, Vol. II, 4th. Edition, (London: William Phillips, 1825), 591. For a discussion of Penn's attitudes to women see Linda Ford, "William Penn's Views on Women: Subjects of Friendship", *Quaker History*, 72 (Fall 1983), 75-102.

[39]Quoted in Braithwaite, *Second Period of Quakerism*, 287. Other admonitions to individual women are noted by Lucia K. Beamish in "The Quaker Understanding of the Ministerial Vocation", (B.Lit. Thesis, Oxford, 1965), 142, although this may reflect disorderly conduct on the part of the women concerned, rather than a growing hostility to women preachers per se.

[40]Braithwaite, *Second Period of Quakerism*, 274. Whether this "taxed seventeenth century feminine capacity to the utmost" is a matter of opinion, however.

[41]Ibid., 517.

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